THE DISGUISE.

VOL. II.

THE

DISGUISE.

A

THE

DRAMATIC NOVEL.

BRITISH MUSEUM

VOL. II.

LONDON:

Printed for J. DODSLEY, in Pall-Mall.

M DCC LXXI.

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ACT I. SCENE I.

SCENE A CHAMBER.

HARRIET.

MRS. HENBURY is not ufually fo low—I fear my mother is fo ill that fhe knows not how to leave her. Cruel fate!

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ACT IV. SCENE I.

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fate! that I ſhould not be ſuffered to attend her, and to endeavour, by my tender cares and attentions, to repay her ſome of the thouſand anxious hours I have coſt her.

O

SCENE

SCENE II.

Enter Mrs. HENBURY.

OH! Henbury, how is my dear mother? Your long ſtay has kept me on the rack.

Mrs. Hen. I wiſh I could relieve your uneaſineſs; but alas! I have no good news to tell you, except it be that lady Edmonds's health is no more affected than one muſt neceſſarily expect. If the frame is delicate, the body cannot be at eaſe when the mind is diſtreſſed.

Her. Alas! I hoped that the night might have calmed her mind, and reflexion abated her apprehensions for me.

Mrs. Hen. So far your hopes were answered; she rose this morning more composed, more resigned, and Mr. Henbury felt great consolation from the favourable change; but it lasted not long. About an hour before I went thither, her servant had informed her, that private orders had just been given by Sir Jeffery, to Thomas, to get all things ready for his departure this evening, when he intended setting out for London with Mr. Edmonds.

Her. With my uncle!

Mrs. Hen. With him. Thomas, it seems, is enamoured of Lady Edmonds's maid, and therefore could not forbear divulging

a ſecret ſo diſagreeable to him. He tells her alſo, that Mr. Edmonds has often endeavoured to prevail with Sir Jeffery to go with him to town, but he always reſiſted his perſuaſions, alledging that he could not leave his Harriet; but that impediment being removed, he now made little reſiſtance.

Har. I fear my uncle has ſome bad views in this.

Mrs. Hem. It cannot admit of a doubt. He will certainly make all poſſible advantage of having him in his power. Small as my lady's influence appears, ſhe has been able by her vigilance to fruſtrate many of Mr. Edmonds's deſigns: ſhe inſpires him with that awe, which the wicked cannot help feeling in the preſence of ſpotleſs virtue, and inflexible integrity. He is ſenſible that ſhe is thoroughly acquainted

with his vileneſs, and has often relinquiſhed deſigns againſt Sir Jeffery's fortune, when he has found they were diſcovered, rather than drive her to a neceſſity of laying open his whole conduct to his brother, leſt truth ſhould prevail over art: and this he might the better do, as ſhe has never attempted to obſtruct his obtaining a great ſhare of Sir Jeffery's income, ſince that leſs affected her children than herſelf; the only perſon whoſe intereſts ſhe ever neglected. He has therefore long wiſhed to get him from my lady, and in all probability will keep him ſo till he has defrauded him, by one means or other, of his whole fortune.

Hen. This is really an alarming conſideration.

Mrs. Hen. Is has not only renewed, but increaſed, Lady Edmonds's anxiety. She fears

fears your being deprived of your whole inheritance; and expoſed to that poverty through life, which filled her with uneaſineſs, when ſhe apprehended it of a ſhorter duration.

Hen. But how can that be? The greateſt part of my father's eſtate is ſettled on his heir-male; whenever therefore I aſſert my claim as that heir, it muſt be reſtored to me.

Mrs. Hen. It will be half the world over before that time. Mr. Edmonds's extravagance is ſuch, that no money can continue long in his poſſeſſion; and for his own ſecurity, he will certainly take care firſt to have the eſtate ſold; which, as he is preſumptive heir, may be done with the help of a little deceit, and he will eaſily contrive, when it is reduced into ſpecie, both

both portable and current, to prevent your recovering one shilling.

Har. This is really a very awkward circumstance; but if my mother enjoys a sufficient degree of affluence for her life, my own poverty could not afflict me, were it not for one cruel consequence; it entirely deprives me of all hope of obtaining my Emilia, should fortune so far stand my friend, as to prevent her maraiage with Sir Richard.

Mrs. Hen. Is it possible that in your present distress you can find leisure to think of your unlucky passion for her?

Har. My dear Henbury, it is my greatest distress. If I could as well bear being deprived of Emilia as of my fortune, you would not see me very uneasy. Her determined obedience to her father, touches

me more nearly than all other evils put together. Indeed, when I enjoy her preſence, I can feel no other. The happieſt hour I ever paſſed was laſt night, while ſhe was condoling with me on my unfortunate ſituation. The tender affection ſhe expreſſed, charmed me to ſuch a degree, that forgetting all my promiſes, I was on the very point of diſcovering the ſecret of my diſguiſe, and declaring the ardour of my paſſion; when a meſſage from Lord Bruton, by a ſeaſonable interruption, gave me leiſure to recollect myſelf.

Mrs. Hon. You did not foreſee how great a loſer you would be by that diſcovery. It is to your diſguiſe that you owe all the innocent, tender, expreſſions of affection that ſo much charm you. Were that removed, determined as ſhe is to obey her father, you could expect only to be avoided when it was poſſible, and when

it

it was not, to be treated with rigor. So far from making any return to your love, her principles would even forbid her listening to it.

Har. But how transient is the pleasure I receive from her affection! it is soon damped by the thought of Sir Richard Luton. When I see the time approaching that will give her to his arms, all her affectionate expressions, and little tender caresses, are daggers to my heart. Could I lay aside my disguise, the friendship she now feels might be converted into love, and love is generally strong enough to conquer duty.

Mrs. Hen. Not in such a woman as Emilia; you might very probably render her unhappy, but you could not make her disobedient. I am persuaded, however painful the task, she will always force her heart

heart to conform to her duty. It might prove refractory, but she would rather punish, than indulge its stubbornness.

Har. How soothing it is to hear justice done to those we love! while you increase my despair, you soften it by the praise you give to her who is the cause of it. Yet might not one be excused for quarrelling with merits that destroy one's hopes? But though my happiness depends on it, I know not how to wish her a virtue less.

SCENE

SCENE III.

Enter EMILIA *and* CAROLINE.

MY Emilia! my Caroline! how kind you are!

Em. You would have seen us two hours ago, my Harriet, might we have indulged our impatience; but we were obliged to make breakfast for my father, who I thought would never release us; and to compleat my uneasiness, we met Lord Lessingham in our way, who detained us, I thought, an age; but I durst not leave him and Caroline

roline together, for fear ill luck ſhould bring my father that way.

Her. Though I have longed with the utmoſt impatience to ſee you, yet I cannot be ſo ſelfiſh as to repine at your laſt detention; and I dare ſay Caroline and you differed ſo much in the computation of time, that ſhe will tell me it was but a few minutes.

Car. Indeed I ſhould ſpeak more nearly the truth, were I to ſay ſo; but Emilia's impatience would have thought a ſecond long. Her anxiety for you has neither allowed her any ſleep in the night, nor any peace ſince ſhe was up. She has not known a word that has been ſaid to her to-day, was more at croſs purpoſes with my father than ever he was with her, and to Lord Leſſingham ſhe was actually rude. It was fortunate for Sir Richard he did not come

in

in her way, she would have forgot the favour of last night, which procured him more smiles, than he had received from her from the time of their first acquaintance. I am sure the meeting of her this morning must be a worse omen than meeting a hare or a raven.

Em. I know not how that might be, but I am sure a rencontre with a lover is a most reviving cordial. How my Caroline's tongue runs this morning! like the lady in the Mock Doctor, she is making herself amends for past dumbness by her present volubility. The dumb pulse is indeed seldom a malady of long continuance in our sex.

Har. Thanks to my dear Emilia for her kind anxiety, and thanks to my Caroline for telling it me. By feeling for my sorrows, Emilia, you dispel them; nothing

can

can afflict me, that brings with it a proof of the tenderneſs of your friendſhip.

Car. To meet a lover is, I allow, beginning a day agreeably enough to make one ſet out in one's courſe with ſome harmony of ſpirits; but I am ſure Lord Leſſingham ſaid nothing to me half ſo flattering as what Harriet has now addreſſed to you, Emilia. It is pity you are not a man, Harriet, you would make love prettier than any one breathing. What a loſs her ſex is to you, Emily! what an infinite number of fine things would ſhe whiſper in your ear? we ſhould abſolutely all pine away with envy.

Em. I believe, indeed, your lovers would be diſtanced; but, to ſay the truth, it is better as it is; Harriet Edmonds is the moſt amiable of friends, but Harry Edmonds would be the moſt dangerous of lovers. I ſhould not only be ſorry ſhe

ſhould

ſhould change her ſex, but I deſire that my lovers may be as unlike her as poſſible, except it were the man I am to marry; for though I hope always to keep my heart in proper ſubjection to my duty, yet I do not chuſe to have any contention with it. My deſire of victory is not great enough to make me wiſh for a battle.

Har. Do you then think, Emilia, that a change in my ſex would alter the nature of your affection? and that you ſhould in that caſe make as perfect a return to my love, as you do to my friendſhip?

Em. I cannot anſwer that queſtion with any certainty, there being no point on which I am more ignorant; but I have heard Platonic love ſo exploded by argument, and ſeen it ſo diſgraced by practice, that I have always ſufficiently doubted of its exiſtence, to determine me never to

make

make the experiment. If there is no such thing, either my affection muſt on the preſent ſuppoſition change its nature, or you muſt, by ceaſing to be a woman, ceaſe to be amiable; and I ſee no reaſon why meerly a change of ſex ſhould have that effect, as all the qualities of mind or heart, for which I eſteem you, would equally pleaſe, whether you were dreſſed in a coat, waiſtcoat, and bag-wig, or a negligee and blond-cap.

Mrs. Hen. A bag-wig! then you confine her to that; you don't think ſhe would be equally amiable in a ſhort bob, a ſcratch, or a brigadier?

Car. Oh no! every woman would wiſh her lover a little of a beau.

Har. Upon my word, Caroline, we are much obliged to Lord Leſſingham for having

ving reſtored you to your natural vivacity. His converſation was certainly peculiarly enlivening this morning.

Car. Not if I had as little faith in Platonic love as my ſiſter has; for I ſee no reſource for us but ſoaring into Platonics. He frankly acknowledges he has little hopes of his father's conſent, having been rebuffed in an attempt he has made to gain it; but I am ſo well pleaſed with finding I have not loſt his affection, that I am very ready to riſe to the ſublime, and imagine I can be very happy in my Platoniſm.

Em. I believe you could; but depend upon it, Caroline, you will not find the ſame ſublimity in his lordſhip's affections. There is more earth, and leſs ſpirit in the compoſition of man; they are formed of groſſer particles; and you muſt not expect his

his lordſhip's Platonics to hold out many years, if lord Bruton ſhould continue inexorable.

Car. But if love is denied us, you may allow a tender friendſhip to exiſt between us.

Em. Yes; when years have robbed you of your charms, and his lordſhip of his paſſions, I will allow you may feel a very ſincere and tender friendſhip for each other, but not till then; for though I ſuppoſe it poſſible before, yet the experiment is too hazardous.

Har. I hope you will not be reduced to make the experiment, while it is attended with any hazard; but that Lord Bruton will be brought to conſent to ſo proper an union, and give you leave to love as long as a reaſonable pair can expect: a tender friendſhip

friendſhip may then ſucceed, and be indulged without any danger.

Mrs. Hen. And perhaps they will be no loſers by the exchange.

Har. Hum — that I don't know.

Mrs. Hen. Do'nt you think a calm, mild, clear evening, more agreeable than the ſcorching heat and dazzling brightneſs of a noon-day ſun?

Har. No; the ſun enlivens the mind, and gilds every proſpect; it vivifies all nature, and renders noon the moſt glorious part of the day.

Em. Each has its charms; but I am of Mrs. Henbury's opinion, I think the ſerenity of a fine evening is moſt agreeable.

Car.

Car. I agree with you. A riſing ſun is a charming object, whereas in its meridian it dazzles one's eyes, and renders one too blind to ſee it at all.

Har. I might more eaſily be brought over to your ſide of the queſtion, if evening were not ſo frequently attended by damps and chilling breezes.

Car. Oh! but we exclude all ſuch things from our evening.

Mrs. Hen. I fear then your evenings are as little to be found as the conſtant brightneſs of a meridian ſun. I find you are all unreaſonable. Nothing can properly regulate our expectations, but the experience gained by frequent diſappointments.

Car. May our inexperience then remain as long as poſſible; wiſdom is too dearly purchaſed by diſappointments.

Mrs. Hen. That may be, but we are not free to chuſe whether we will make the purchaſe or not, it is a commodity forced upon us.

Enter SERVANT.

Serv. Lord Bruton, madam, deſires leave to wait upon you.

Har. Lord Bruton, why ſhould he viſit me?

Mrs. Hen. That you can learn only from himſelf, but receive him by all means; perhaps he may be attempting a reconciliation between you and your father.

Har.

Har. That would be an obligation indeed; and I think in ſome ſort he owes it me. Deſire him to walk up.

Em. We will leave you, and return when you are more at leiſure.

Har. Don't go away, rather take this opportunity of bringing him acquainted with Miſs Caroline; her very appearance will juſtify his ſon, and may turn out to their mutual benefit.

Car. As high as you thought my ſpirits, they are not equal to ſuch an interview. His preſence would diſconcert me extremely. I am ſenſible I cannot ſtand the ſcrutinizing obſervations of one who will behold me with a prejudice in my diſfavour. If I can paſs uncenſured by the impatial, it is as much as I can expect. Therefore, adieu, my dear Harriet.

Em. Good morrow, my dear; may his lordſhip's viſit prove uſeful to you.

Har. It ought to produce a conſiderable benefit, to compenſate for the preſent mortification it gives me, by depriving me of my dear friends.

[*Exeunt Em. Car. and Mrs. Henbury.*

YOUR lordſhip does me an unexpected honour.

SCENE IV.

Enter Lord BRUTON.

HARRIET.

YOUR lordſhip does me an unexpected honour.

Lord Bru. You have a right, madam, to expect every kind of reſpect that can be paid you; even our adoration, if you will accept them.

Har. My ambition falls very ſhort of ſuch expectations, my lord, and you will oblige me if you will forbear thoſe very

high compliments, as I cannot ſuppoſe your lordſhip gave yourſelf this trouble only to flatter me.

Lord Bru. My motive for waiting on you, madam, was to beg pardon for the part I have unintentionally had in cauſing your difference with Sir Jeffery; and to make ſome apology for my ſon, who, I fear, gave you reaſon to doubt his affection; and by, at leaſt, the coldneſs of his addreſs, determined you to refuſe your hand to a man who ſo little deſerv'd you.

Her. If I have any reaſon to find fault with Lord Leſſingham, it is for the too great aſſiduity of his addreſs. It might do him honour as a ſon; but as in my opinion ſincerity and juſtice to the woman he intended to marry, are as great duties as obedience to a father, I cannot think he did much honour to his integrity, in endeavouring

vouring to perſuade me of his affections, when another woman was miſtreſs of his heart.

Lord Bru. He might perhaps have had a prior attachment; but it is impoſſible that a man who has ſeen you, can love any other woman.

Har. If your lordſhip knew Miſs Caroline Martin, even your exceſs of politeneſs could not lead you to hazard ſo unmerited a compliment; for I aſſure you ſhe is very much my ſuperior in every thing that can captivate the heart of man. I ſhould have had a bad opinion of Lord Leſſingham's taſte, had he not given her the preference: and though I have a right to complain of his pretending love to me, as it might have betrayed me into an union with a man who muſt have accepted me with reluctance, yet your lordſhip has rea-

ſon to be greatly pleaſed with his behaviour, as few ſons have given ſo ſtrong a proof of filial obedience.

Lord Bru. As for his obedience, I know pretty well in what eſtimation to hold it; he is ſenſible that my fortune is in my power, and when that is the caſe, few ſons are undutiful. It is entails and ſettlements that make them refractory.

Har. Surely your lordſhip judges too ſeverely of your ſon's conduct; I cannot but think the deſire of obliging you was his ſtrongeſt motive; for he could ſcarcely imagine you could be offended at his attachment to a woman every way ſo amiable and deſerving as Miſs Martin.

Lord Bru. Why look you, my dear madam, the moſt neceſſary qualification for my lord's wife is a large fortune; ſuch an

one would appear to me both amiable and deserving, though I had not taken the trouble of examining into her natural qualities; but a poor angel could not be approved by me. I have a right to chuse on different principles for myself. My fortune is my own, and I am under no necessity of endeavouring to increase it. Love is my deity, and by his irresistible power I swear, that I would prefer the possession of this dear hand (taking Harriet's hand) to the greatest fortune in the universe.

Har. I find your lordship is desirous of making me amends, for the neglect of which you imagine your son was guilty; but you may be assured it is unnecessary, as I have declared he performed his part but too well for the credit of his probity.

Lord Bru. No, my angel, it is not by way of amends for the deficiency of ano-

ther, but in obedience to the dictates of my heart, that I profeſs myſelf devoted to you. I adored you from the firſt moment I beheld you; and I ſhould have convinced you by the moſt ſerious addreſs of the power your charms had over me, had not I felt a reluctance to being the rival of my ſon.

Her. Were your lordſhip a younger man, you would ſurprize me, by declaring ſo ſudden a paſſion. Nothing appears to me more idle than thoſe inſtantaneous impreſſions even on the youngeſt heart; but ſurely, my lord, at your time of day, a man muſt have more ſtrength and ſobriety of judgment, than to be liable to ſuch follies.

Lord Bru. My dear girl, you miſtake the point extremely, mine is the only age when ſo ſudden a paſſion is not a folly. Experience has taught me a quick diſcern-

ment

ment of a woman's merit. A man much younger than myſelf ſees not beyond externals; he perceives clearly the features of the face, but he does not in them diſcover the features of the mind; and though a man much older might have the diſcernment of experience, yet love would be a folly in him, becauſe he could not expect a return.

Har. So — his lordſhip thinks himſelf mighty amiable then. — I wonder at what age he ſuppoſes a man ceaſes to be ſo. [*Aſide.*] I don't doubt but there is much ſolidity in your lordſhip's reaſoning, therefore I ſhall not diſpute the propriety of your conceiving a ſudden paſſion, but from part of your own argument I can convince you of the folly of chuſing me for its object, by aſſuring your lordſhip, that I cannot poſſibly return it.

Lord Bru. My dear child, the choice of the object is not in our power. Your charms obtruded themselves upon me involuntarily, and let me die if it is in my power to ceafe to adore you; I muft do fo till the laft hour of my life.

Har. That would be a lamentable degree of conftancy, my lord. It is pity your lordfhip's experience did not enable you to difcover the obduracy of my heart in the features of my face, it might, by killing all hope, have prevented this gigantic paffion from making fo quick a progrefs. Really, the moft inexperienced novice could not have fallen into a worfe fcrape. But wifdom will nod fometimes, your lordfhip was certainly in a profound nap, when your heart received fo deep an impreffion.

Lord

Lord Bru. You may treat my paſſion as a jeſt, madam, and think what I have ſaid is no more than common-place gallantry; but upon my ſoul I am ſerious. I love you to the utmoſt exceſs of paſſion; I adore you. Put my love to any trial you pleaſe; nothing can yield me ſo much happineſs as doing you ſervice. Command me in any way you chuſe; there is nothing ſo difficult but I will perform it with pleaſure.

Har. The offer is really worthy of a knight-errant; but I have no taſk to impoſe on your love, as I cannot by a return of affection reward the performance. I could propoſe an eſſential ſervice to your lordſhip's generoſity and compaſſion, if you would from thoſe motives undertake it.

Lord Bru. Only point it out to me and believe it done. Speak it my angel; you will confer an eternal obligation by honouring me with your commands.

Har. I need not tell your lordſhip, that my uncle has great influence over my father; if you would uſe the intereſt friendſhip gives you with the one, and your rank may entitle you to with the other, to effect a reconciliation between me and my father, I ſhould be moſt eſſentially obliged to you. Surely ſuch an advocate might obtain my pardon.

Lord Bru. I will tell you, my angel, how it may be done at once; give me leave to ſay you have promis'd to bleſs me with your hand; ſuch a reparation of the offence which has exaſperated them, cannot fail of obtaining forgiveneſs.

Har.

Har. No, my lord, though I anxiously desire to be restored to my father's favour, yet I would not purchase the blessing by a falshood.

Lord Bru. I did not mean you should, my dearest creature; no, make it truth, and thereby render me the happiest fellow in the world.

Har. That would not be a means of making either your lordship or myself happy. Believe me it would answer neither of our purposes. Were I to agree to what you propose, there would be something new in the denouement of my adventures; to be banished my father's house for refusing to marry a pretty young lord, and restored to it by marrying his father. No one could doubt

doubt but I was well rewarded for the vexation I had endured.

Lord Bru. There is something very foolish in the relative terms of father and son, they are apt to excite falſe ideas. Though there muſt be a good many years difference in their ages, yet various things may take off from the conſequences of that indifference. Some men are older at thirty, than others at fifty; it is by the perſon and manners, and not by the pariſh-regiſter, that we ſhould eſtimate people's ages. I have known many men to whom I might have been father, who ought to have been conſidered as my ſeniors, if we had proper notions of youth and age; therefore, my angel, don't imagine I am old becauſe I am a father.

Har.

Har. I give your lordſhip my word, I do not, I would as ſoon marry you now, as if you were but five and twenty; if I have any objection of that ſort to make, it is, that you are too juvenile. But the *anno domini* of your birth is of no importance in this affair. I have ſtronger reaſons for not accepting the honour your lordſhip offers me; therefore, if I can obtain your interceſſion in my favour on no other terms, I muſt be contented to relinquiſh all hopes of it.

Lord Bru. You would have more reaſon to complain of that, my lovely girl, if you were not bent on depriving me of hope; but I can tell you I am an obſtinate fellow, I would as ſoon part with my life as with my hopes; and to

ſhew

shew that I have some dependance on your generosity, I will serve you to the best of my power; and trust to you for my reward.

Har. If your lordship expects any such reward, as you hint at, I beg you will not serve me; for you rate your services at too high a price; but I imagined you would have thought it a kind of duty to endeavour to redress the evil, which you have had a great share in bringing upon me.

Lord Bru. I have offered you the best amends in my power, but I submit to your commands, and will endeavour to serve you from justice, since you will not allow me the more pleasing motive of hope. — [*Aside.*] The devil take me if I do though; success would ill answer

my

my views; if she will not listen to my proposals now that she is distressed, I should certainly be rejected, were she again received at home. If she could be brought to marry me, there is no doubt of her father's approbation, with all its convenient consequences. —— [*Aloud.*] Well, what say you? my angel! will you give me leave to try my influence?

Har. If your lordship is sufficiently disinterested to do it from generosity, I need not repeat, that I should be sincerely grateful, for so great an obligation.

Enter SERVANT.

Serv. Mr. Henbury, madam, desires to speak with you.

Har.

Har. Shew him into the parlour. I am very ſorry, my lord, that I am called away by buſineſs.

Lord Bru. Uſe no ceremony with me, my lovely girl. I leave you; you will permit me to acquaint you with my ſucceſs.

Har. Your lordſhip will oblige me.

[*Exeunt ſeverally.*

SCENE

SCENE V.

SCENE CHANGES TO SIR JEFFERY'S HOUSE.

Lady EDMONDS, *Sir* JEFFERY, *Mr.* EDMONDS.

Lady EDMONDS.

I Am am told, Sir Jeffery, but I cannot possibly believe it, that you design leaving Tunbridge this afternoon.

Sir Jeff. [*Aside to Mr. Edmonds.*] What ſhall I ſay?

Mr. Ed. Acknowledge it boldly. [*Aside to Sir Jeffery.*

Sir Jeff. Yes, I do deſign it, and what of that?

Lady Ed. In the preſent ſtate of our domeſtic affairs, I did not imagine you would have left the place; and leſs did I ſuppoſe you would have done it in ſo ſecret a manner, and to the affliction you are ſenſible I muſt be under for the loſs of my daughter, add the unkindneſs of a huſband.

Sir Jeff. Heyday! am I to aſk your leave to go to London?

Lady

Lady Ed. No, ſurely; but might I not reaſonably hope you would order me to accompany you?

Mr. Ed. My dear madam, that would have been giving you an unreaſonable trouble. Sir Jeffery's ſtay will not be long; it is therefore little worth while to remove you from a place, which is at this time of the year ſo much more agreeable than London. Beſide, the uneaſineſs Miſs Edmonds's conduct has given my brother, renders it deſirable for him to ſeek relief from a change of place as ſpeedily as poſſible; and a lady's journey requires a long preparation.

Lady Ed. I am ſo far from preferring this place to any other, that wherever my

my husband is, will always appear to me the most eligible abode; and to shew you that no long preparation is necessary for me, I will very readily accompany Sir Jeffery to London this afternoon, or even the next hour, if he will give me leave.

Sir Jeff. But if so be, that in case I chuse to go alone, you must stay here. Cannot I stir without having you at my elbow? You will be putting me on leading-strings presently, I suppose.

Lady Ed. But, Sir Jeffery, what business have I at Tunbridge? I came hither only to attend you. My health does not require the waters, nor is my mind in a state capable of sharing the amusements of the place.

Mr.

Mr. Ed. I dare say, madam, Sir Jeffery will have no objection to your ladyſhip's going to your country-ſeat.

Lady Ed. I ſhould be glad, Sir, to receive my anſwer from Sir Jeffery.

Sir Jeff. Why, if ſo be you have it from my brother, it is all one, he knows my mind.

Lady Ed. I believe he does, becauſe he regulates it by his own.

Mr. Ed. Nay, my dear madam, now you do me too much honour; my brother knows he has always governed me

entirely, and indeed I have through life felt the benefit of being under his prudent direction.

Sir Jeff. So I have, my lady, he has always been a very dutiful brother to me; I have always governed him, as one may ſay, with a wet finger, and I believe he never had cauſe to repent it: perhaps ſome people may be briſker and more witty than I; but I am prudent, very prudent, a judicious adviſer, brother.

Mr. Ed. Indeed I have always had the good fortune to find you ſo, Sir Jeffery; you think deeply, ſolidly.

Sir

Sir Jeff. Ay, I am none of your flashy fellows; I love to go to the bottom of things, brother.

Lady Ed. All this is little to my purpose. Dear Sir Jeffery, permit me to accompany you.

Sir Jeff. Once for all, my lady, I will not, brother and I will travel comfortably together, without being troubled with fiddle faddle women.

Lady Ed. Give me leave to follow you then.

Sir Jeff. What I won't, and if so be, that, in case you pretend to come after me, I won't see you, I can tell you that; I will order the servants not to let you in. What, do you think there will not be people enough in London, if so be you don't thrust yourself there.

Lady Ed. But consider, my dear, in how difficult a situation you leave me. Should my poor Harriet beg pardon for her disobedience, and seek a reconciliation, I shall not know how to act in your absence. What answer can I give her, without your sanction!

Mr. Ed. [*Aside to Sir Jeffery.*] She is endeavouring to pump you, and wants to find out how long Harriet may venture to perſiſt in diſobedience. You muſt diſclaim all future connections with her.

Sir Jeff. Why look you, wife, if in caſe ſhe does, it is eaſy enough for you to know how to act. If ſo be ſhe promiſes to marry Lord Leſſingham, ſend me word, but if ſo be ſhe does not, a fig for all ſhe can ſay, I will have nothing more to do with her; and you muſt ſend her word ſo; and refuſe to hear any more from her, or to let her ſpeak to you; I ſhall take care ſhe ſhall

never be the better for me; there are lawyers enough in London to make that ſure enough.

Lady Ed. Since, Sir, you can be ſo much impoſed upon by your worſt enemy, concealment is no longer of uſe; and, whatever may be the conſequence to myſelf, I muſt tell you, that in Harriet you ſee your ſon and heir; no daughter, but a ſon, your only ſon.

Sir Jeff. How! Harriet turned into a man! Have I then a ſon! a ſon! an heir to my eſtate and title!

Mr.

Mr. Ed. This is a ſtranger metamorphoſis than any in Ovid. Be not impoſed upon, brother. This is the moſt impudent bare-faced fiction I ever heard. I beg your pardon, madam, the expreſſion may be harſh, but the impoſition is too atrocious. [*Aſide.*] Is it poſſible my curſed ſtars could play me ſuch a trick as this!

Lady Ed. You may take what liberty you pleaſe, Sir. I can excuſe the effects of ſo ſevere a diſappointment. To find all your views fruſtrated, may well touch you nearly; but the pleaſure I receive from it is a ſufficient conſola-

tion under all the abuſe you can beſtow on me.

Sir Jeff. But how can Harriet be a boy, my lady? ſhe has been a girl ever ſince ſhe was born; the midwife told me ſo when ſhe firſt came into the world.

Lady Ed. It is true, Sir, you were told ſo, and I am bound to aſk your pardon for the deceit, to which nothing could have induced me but the anxious deſire of preſerving to you the life of one ſon, out of ſo many as I had brought, and which I was well convinced, I could no otherwiſe effect; and I flattered myſelf,

ſelf, that the happy conſequence would excuſe the fault.

Mr. Ed. Sir Jeffery, madam, is not ſo weak as you imagine him; you have always thought yourſelf ſo much his ſuperior in underſtanding, that you could impoſe on him as much as you pleaſed, but you now ſtrain the point too far; he has ſagacity enough to ſee through all your arts; and well knows, that how capricious ſoever your ſex may be, you are not whimſical enough to breed up boys as girls.

Lady Ed. Mr. Edmonds, caprice never made a part of my character; my

motive was juſt, prudent, and laudable; and when that is known, *you*, I am ſure, cannot in your conſcience call it whimſical.

Mr. Ed. You could have but one motive, madam, and I think I do not ſpeak in harſh terms, when I call whimſical the deſire of mortifying your huſband, for almoſt twenty years, with the belief, that he had no ſon to ſucceed him in his honours and his fortune. Moſt people would call ſuch an action by a worſe name; they would think you took a daily joy in his vexation: but I have a better opinion of *you*, and am therefore convinced you are now only

only practiſing a little feminine deceit; and perhaps the tenderneſs of the mother may be ſome excuſe for the falſeneſs of the woman. But believe me Sir Jeffery ſees through your arts; indeed they could not impoſe on an ideot. Harriet a man, no, no.

Sir Jeff. Indeed I am afraid not; for if ſo be ſhe were, why ſhould you make a ſecret of it?

Lady Ed. This is not a proper time to tell my reaſon, but you ſhall ſoon be acquainted with it.

Mr. Ed. Ay, ay, put off the evil day. You think if you can get her received

again

again into the house under this pretence, you will together be able to trump up some story that will obtain her forgiveness.

Sir Jeff. But that will not do; I can tell you that I will know all, before I will see *her*, or forgive *you*, if so be I ever do at all.

Lady Ed. If it must be so then, I no longer hesitate to declare, that this worst of men, this deceitful brother of yours, was so diligent in removing out of his way every male-child we had, that no one might stand between him and the succession, that I had no other means of

of preſerving this laſt of my children, but concealing its ſex, and thus eluding the effects of his avarice and malice.

Mr. Ed. Good heavens! is it poſſible ſo wicked a heart can be concealed under ſo ſweet a countenance! Can any one harbour ſuch deep malice unprovoked! I will ſay more, againſt the man who has ever loved her, who has carefully concealed all her faults, and weakneſſes from an unſuſpecting huſband! and am I thus rewarded! accuſed of murdering my dear brother's children! wicked, wicked woman!

Sir Jeff. Wicked indeed, and deviliſh, to accuſe my poor brother of ſuch crimes,

crimes, when I am ſure he was as ſorry for the death of every child as I was; nay, he cried a great deal more, and has often ſaid, that money can give him no pleaſure, ſince I have no ſons to inherit it.

Mr. Ed. The juſtice I owe to my own innocence requires, that I ſhould mention ſuſpicions, but too well grounded, which hitherto I have concealed within my own breaſt; and indeed in ſpite of glaring proofs, could ſcarcely believe, as I could not conceive any motive that ſhould tempt a mother to deſtroy her own offspring; but I now ſee it was done only with an intent

tent of hereafter accuſing me of the crime, to deprive me of the friendſhip of a brother whom I have always loved with a tenderneſs of affection which ſhe cannot forgive.

Sir Jeff. Oh! wicked, wicked woman! to injure my poor dear brother ſo! If the children did not die a natural death, it muſt have been your own doing, to ſpite me, and abuſe my brother. Out of my ſight, wicked creature.

Lady Ed. I ſhall not diſpute your will, Sir, in that reſpect, I am too indifferent about myſelf to be much concerned

mind what becomes of me; but do not be perſuaded to throw away the bleſſing you have always longed for. Act as you pleaſe towards me; but receive to your arms a ſon who will give pleaſure to your future days, whoſe talents will do honour to his family, and whoſe excellent diſpoſition renders him every thing a parent can deſire.

Mr. Ed. Is it poſſible, madam, you can perſiſt in your endeavour to impoſe ſuch a falſhood on your huſband? Why will you puſh on your own ruin? I would willingly have contented myſelf with diſproving your aſſertion in regard to Harriet's ſex, but you will

reduce

reduce me to the neceſſity of producing indiſputable evidence, that ſhe is no child of my brother's; and whatever be her ſex, ſhould apply for proviſion to her real father.

Lady Ed. What can the villain mean by ſuch an aſperſion!

Sir Jeff. How is this! No child of mine! Why, what is than you ſay, brother? could my wife dare to cuckold me?

Mr. Ed. There is nothing in ſuch an action, brother, beyond the daring of many a timorous woman; it requires no great heroiſm. As I thought

ignorance

ignorance in this point was conducive to your happineſs, I ſhould not have acquainted you with it, if ſhe had not in this manner forced me to it.

Sir Jeff. You have indeed ſometimes given me a kind, friendly hint, of ſuch a thing; but I could never believe it. Cuckold me! Oh! you vile creature! to uſe me ſo! do I look as if I were made for a cuckold? Oh! you wicked ſtrumpet!

Lady Ed. The amazing impudence and malice of ſuch a charge ſtuns me; I did not think it poſſible for any man to be ſo conſummate in villainy and impudence,

pudence, as to dare to utter to my face ſo falſe, ſo infamous, an accuſation.

Mr. Ed. I make no doubt but your ladyſhip is ſtunned and confounded at finding yourſelf diſcovered; but an humbler ſtile would better ſuit you. I can bring ſuch proof of the truth of what I have ſaid, as will ſoon deprive you of all power of denying it; though I confeſs your ladyſhip's aſſurance might well deſerve the epithet you ſo politely laviſh on me.

Sir Jeff. Out of my ſight, thou impudent ſtrumpet; out of my ſight, vile wretch; I will expoſe thy ſhame to all the world; begone, I ſay.

Lady

Lady Ed. I obey you, Sir, nor am I under any apprehenſion but you will ſoon be undeceived; levity and imprudence may ſometimes expoſe innocence to unjuſt cenſure, and falſe appearances may render it difficult to be cleared up; but my conduct has been ſuch, that I defy the moſt infernal malice to prove even the ſhadow of ſuch a crime on me. That bad man may accuſe me in words, but he can find no action in my life, that the moſt malevolent can conſtrue even into the appearance of guilt.

Mr. Ed. Silent acquieſcence, madam, in Sir Jeffery's command, would bear

more

more of the appearance of innocence, than the boldeſt defence.

Lady Ed. My acquieſcence in a command that will deliver me from the ſight of ſo deteſtable an object as yourſelf, is an eaſy exertion of obedience. I do not wonder that my preſence is odious to you; but be aſſured there is a Being whoſe preſence ought to confound you far more than mine, who will not ſuffer ſuch atrocious villany to paſs unpuniſhed. I go, Sir, but depend upon it, the vengeance of heaven will ere long revenge the great, the cruel injuries, with which you have oppreſſed an unhappy woman. I tremble at the thought

of him who ſees all your actions with abhorrence, and is all-powerful to puniſh them. [*Exit.*

Mr. Ed. [*Aſide.*] Why will my nerves obey her? I do indeed tremble: ſtrange and laſting effects of youthful prejudices.

Sir Jeff. This is a ſad affliction, brother; that ever I ſhould live to be a cuckold!

Mr. Ed. Let it not diſturb you, Sir Jeffery; your caſe is not uncommon. If the world proceeds in the ſame courſe as it has done of late years, cuckoldom will ſoon be an eſ-

ſential part of the *bon ton*; there will be no making a tolerable figure in high life without it.

Sir Jeff. But are you ſure, brother, that my lady has really defiled my bed? Who was her paramour? I have been trying to fix upon ſome body; but I proteſt ſhe has carried it ſo cunningly, that I cannot gueſs.

Mr. Ed. Excuſe me, Sir Jeffery, from telling you any particulars till we get to London, where all my proofs are; for as the ſubject is not very agreeable, it will be beſt to finiſh it all at once. [*Aſide.*] Prolific as my invention

vention is, ſome time is neceſſary for me to compoſe a tale, that will appear credible, even to this credulous dolt.

Sir Jeff. Have you proof enough to get me a divorce? I am reſolved I will be divorced?

Mr. Ed. That is a faſhionable ſtep to be ſure; but I confeſs, except damages can be obtained, I don't think it anſwers: it is a licence to your wife to marry her lover, who may the more readily conſent to it from a reaſonable belief that ſhe will give him an opportunity of ſhaking off the marriage-fetters in the like manner, as ſoon as they

they are tired of each other, and when infamy becomes common, there are women who will think they are gainers by losing character and husband together.

Sir Jeff. Then you would advise me against a divorce?

Mr. Ed. I think so; but we will discuss that point more fully when we get to town. Let us go finish the necessary orders for our departure, that we may set off as soon as dinner is over.

Sir Jeff. I have not much to do.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE VI.

SCENE CHANGES TO HARRIET'S LODGING.

HARRIET *and Lord* BRUTON.

Lord BRUTON.

HAVE wealth and titles then no charms for you?

Har.

Har. Yes; a reaſonable ſhare, my lord; I do not idolize them, but I am not inſenſible of their real value. Riches have a thouſand agreeable properties; judiciouſly uſed they afford various pleaſures, and give us thoſe innumerable, nameleſs, indulgences, which, tho' not neceſſary, it is more agreeable to enjoy, than to be deprived of. Rank and titles have always appeared to me deſirable on account of the value they ſtamp on every civility we beſtow. What in a private gentlewoman is only conſidered as neceſſary complaiſance, without which, no one would endure her ſociety, is

received as a favour from a woman of quality; and ſhe might highly oblige half the world by the ſmiles and ſlender courteſies, which we ſquander away to no purpoſe.

Lord Bru. You have a right to ridicule the advantages of titles; beauty gives a ſuperiority more generally acknowledged, and more aſſiduouſly courted; but rank certainly has its value.

Har. I proteſt I don't mean to ridicule it. The deſire of pleaſing is natural, and we are perhaps never more gratified, than when we oblige; I am therefore ſerious, when I ſay, I think

titles valuable, as the means of doing both with the greateſt eaſe. I have always thought the power of conferring favours by every word or look, a great privilege; and though perhaps they have not ſo much influence on ſuperior as on little minds, yet their general uſe renders them deſirable; they are the current coin of ſociety, and as in our common expences though bank-notes contain much in a ſmall compaſs, yet gold and ſilver-coin are moſt neceſſary, as we have continual calls for them; ſo though by our virtues only we can gain the eſteem of the few excellent, yet the multitude, thoſe with whom our moſt conſtant intercourſe

must be, may be won by easy condescensions and little courtesies.

Lord Bru. Since then you allow the value of wealth and title, why will you not accept them?

Har. I grant them desirable, but not necessary, my lord; I can do very well without them; and find myself more inclined to forego the indulgences they bestow, and to let my complaisance go unnoticed and unprized, than to enter into the very serious connection your lordship proposes. Hymen's fetters are too heavy for me.

Lord Bru. Can they be heavy to a woman who is adored by her huſband? The happineſs of your life would be the whole ſtudy and endeavour of mine. I love you with that exceſs of paſſion, that I can find no pleaſure but in pleaſing you.

Har. Your lordſhip's paſſion has been of very quick growth; to riſe to exceſs in leſs than two days acquaintance, ſpeaks an incredible progreſs.

Lord Bru. I grant it unreaſonably ſudden; but if it be abſurd, you muſt lay the blame on your charms, their

irresistible power bears down reason, caution, prudence, and every thing that should defend the heart against so sudden, and so violent an impression.

Har. As your lordship allows that extraordinary power was necessary to produce so immediate an effect, you cannot much wonder if the like impression has not been made on my heart; therefore will not expect a return to so uncommon a passion.

Lord Bru. I do not expect it, my angel. I can hope to obtain your heart only by the sincerity, the tender assiduity

ſiduity of my love; I now therefore only apply to your prudence; and if from that I can obtain your hand, I flatter myſelf my conduct will in time gain, as I am ſure it will deſerve, your affections.

Har. Upon my word, my lord, I am in doubt whether prudence is ever a proper motive to marriage; I queſtion whether it can be prudent for a perſon to put her happineſs out of her own power, exeept affection renders the ſociety of the perſon to whom ſhe commits it very neceſſary to the peace of her mind.

Lord Bru. I never was bigotted to the ſtate of matrimony, I muſt confeſs, madam, but in ſome caſes I think it prudent. Is it not ſo to procure to one's ſelf eaſe and affluence? Is it not prudent in a young lady, who has offended her parents, to obtain their forgiveneſs? Both theſe effects you muſt be ſenſible will be the conſequence of your conſent to become mine; and on theſe conſiderations I build my hopes of your favour. Some little expectations too I form from your good nature; can you determine to doom to wretchedneſs a man who ſo ſincerely loves you?

Har.

Har. Can I ſuppoſe your lordſhip thinks it any great misfortune to be deprived of the object of your wiſhes, when you inflict the like ſuffering on your ſon? He is of an age when the paſſions are ſtronger, and the heart more tender; his affections have had time to be deeply rooted by a pretty long acquaintance with the object. His caſe therefore muſt be more deſperate than yours.

Lord Bru. That is impoſſible. However, I will allow that the heart of youth, and long acquaintance with the lady, may have had as ſtrong effect

as

as your superior charms, and put us on a level; but how then can you plead for him, while you are deaf to me? He has the inconstancy of youth on his side; levity will bring that relief to him which I cannot hope.

Har. Age gives to lovers a happy substitute to the levity of which years have deprived them, even insensibility: thus time brings with it as certain a cure as it takes away; but that your lordship may not charge me with injustice, if you will give your consent to your son's marriage with Miss Caroline Martin, I will promise at the expiration

piration of the next three months to marry your lordſhip, if you ſhall then chuſe it.

Lord Bru. Three months is an age.

Har. I may, poſſibly, put it to your lordſhip's choice in leſs than as many weeks; but as our acquaintance is of ſo late a date, I think it adviſeable, that we ſhould each have the liberty of three months conſideration, if we chuſe to make uſe of it. Now, my lord, you can have no reaſon to charge me with cruelty; the terms I propoſe are not hard ones. Miſs Caroline's fortune is not deſpicable, though Lord Leſſingham might, no doubt, obtain a better;

but

but he muſt then expect to make more than a proportionable abatement in the merit of the lady. Now, if you will not conſent, it is you who refuſe me.

Lord Bru. You place my happineſs at too great a diſtance; temptations to be very alluring ought to be preſent, or at leaſt very near: abridge the term to one month.

Har. Well, my lord, to prove my readineſs to compleat the agreement, at one month's diſtance I will be your lordſhip's wife, if you will accept me as ſuch; but then you muſt give your immediate

mediate consent to the union of the two lovers.

Lord Bru. But how shall I be sure that when that point is gained you will perform your part of the engagement? Pardon the suspicions of an ardent, but timorous, lover.

Har. I think your lordship might have trusted to my honour; however, I cannot complain that you are not so infatuated with your passion, as to be deprived of all prudent caution; and to secure my performance, will give a promise under my hand, if in exchange

change you will give me the consent agreed upon, under yours.

Lord Bru. I can refuse no conditions which will procure me so great a blessing. Let this be a proof of the sincerity of my love, and of the absolute power you have over me. —— Here is pen, ink, and paper; I am ready to execute the agreement. —— I can never think myself too soon assured of my lovely Harriet. [*They both write.*] There is my consent in due form.

Har. [*Takes the paper and reads.*] "In obedience to the idol of my soul, I hereby give under my hand, my consent to my son, Lord Lessingham, to marry

marry Miſs Caroline Martin, whenever he ſhall chuſe it. Witneſs my hand, BRUTON." [*Aſide.*] A note worthy of Lord Foppington; ſtap my vitals. [*Aloud.*] Very well, my lord, and there is my promiſe.

Lord Bru. [*Takes the paper and reads.*] "I hereby promiſe, at the expiration of a month from the date hereof, to marry the Earl of Bruton, if he ſhall then think my hand worth his acceptance. Witneſs my hand, HARRIET EDMONDS." Thanks, a thouſand thanks to my lovely, my adorable girl, you have

have exalted me to felicity, let those dear lips seal the promise.

[*Offers to salute her.*

Har. No, my lord, no man ever yet kissed them; and I am determined to be able to say the same on my wedding-day.

Lord Bru. This hand then must make me some compensation.

[*Takes her hand and kisses it.*

Har. Not very willingly, my lord; this is all foollery. Till the day of performance comes, I must have no demands

mands made on credit, I will, in the mercantile phraſe, honour my notes; but I ſhall not allow that it gives any claims before the time of payment.

Lord Bru. Oh! fye, my angel! why all this prudery? and how could you in this dear note inſert words which implied a poſſibility of my not chuſing to demand the performance? Can man quarrel with his happineſs?

Har. Oh! yes, my lord, he does it every day. It is true, he perhaps does not juſt then perceive it is his happineſs, a blindneſs, which at one time or other, ſeizes us all; but a paſſion ſo

ſudden

ſudden as your lordſhip's, may very naturally be as quick in its decay as in its riſe; therefore, it would have been unreaſonable not to have ſhewn a readineſs to admit of its extinction.

Lord Bru. You would admit of an impoſſibility then; you have kindled a fire in my breaſt that nothing can extinguiſh.

Har. That is much too. —— Is it as pure, as well as laſting, as the Veſtal's fire? for material fires are generally ſubject to a pretty quick decay.

Lord

Lord Bru. Mine is an exception; you will find it as laſting as my life; feeble fires may ſoon die, but a love like mine, death alone can extinguiſh.

Har. Fair promiſes, my lord, but difficult to fulfil. I flatter myſelf your lordſhip will not take amiſs my informing you that ſome buſineſs at preſent requires my attention, and will not allow me to enjoy longer your lordſhip's company.

Lord Bru. I cannot take it ill; for if you did not remind me of the neceſſity of departing, I ſhould never recollect

it; ſo impoſſible is it to quit voluntarily your preſence and converſation: but I take my leave, and hope before the day is over you will permit me to renew my viſit.

Har. The ſituation we are in, in regard to each other, renders it improbable I ſhould deny your lordſhip that permiſſion.

Lord Bru. Adieu, madam, I ſhall live on anticipation, till I again wait on you.

Har. Your ſervant, my lord. [*Exit Lord Bruton.*] Ha, ha, ha, was ever ſo

ſublime, ſo paſſionate a lover! I can anticipate too, and amuſe myſelf with imagining his lordſhip's diſconcerted countenance, when he finds his fair miſtreſs, his gentle Dulcinea, metamorphoſed into a ſpirited young fellow; ha, ha, ha.

SCENE

SCENE VII.

Enter Mrs. HENBURY.

Mrs. HENBURY.

WHAT in the name of wonder can occasion this overflowing of mirth? it can be no common occurrence surely that can have an effect so contrary from what in your situation

tion

tion might be expected. If I were not afraid of disgracing your sex, of the honour of which you are so tenacious, I should believe you in hysterics.

Har. You would be mistaken; for I assure you my mirth is true and genuine.

Mrs. Hen. Lord Bruton must have been very good company; I was afraid his long visit would have tired you.

Har. It certainly was long enough to have tired a more patient person; but it has ended well; he has gone away happy, pho — happy is too cold a term — enraptured — and of the state of mind

wherein he has left me, you will not form a very melancholy idea.

Mrs. Hen. Pray how came you so very agreeable to each other?

Har. As his lordſhip's rank and joy are both ſuperior to mine, I muſt give him the precedency, and firſt acquaint you with the cauſe of his raptures. Be it known unto you then, that I have given him a promiſe under my hand, to marry him this day month, if he continues to deſire it.

Mrs. Hen. To marry him! what can the boy mean? are you mad?

Har. Not abſolutely; what his friendſhip may be when the time of performance comes, I will not pretend to ſay; but I think him obliged to me; he ſays he has an imagination that can anticipate pleaſures; ſurely then he muſt allow himſelf indebted to me for having thus treated him with a whole month's pleaſing anticipation.

Mrs. Hen. But what could induce you to do ſo mad a thing.

Har. The temptation was ſtrong, I aſſure you. Finding his lordſhip ſo very warm and importunate a lover, a ſud-

den thought arose in my mind, that I might possibly extract from it some advantage to Miss Caroline; and that if I failed in the attempt, I might deliver myself from his lordship's addresses, by making his refusal matter of quarrel. On this plan, uttered as soon as formed, I offered to marry his lordship at a stated time, if he would give consent to an immediate union between his son and Caroline. Love conquered; and here is his consent. [*Shews the paper.*

Mrs. Hem. This part of the affair I like very well; but I cannot conceive how you will be extricated out of the

difficulties in which you have involved yourself.

Har. I do not believe there will be any great difficulty in it. Your husband has this morning assured me, that my mother is determined to declare my sex, if she can by no other means keep my father out of my vile uncle's hands; convinced that the desire of possessing a son will conquer all my uncle's persuasions, and prevent his going with him. The secret therefore, you see, is on the point of being divulged; and common report will save me the trouble of damping the joy of my elated lover.

Mrs Hen. But do you imagine he will take ſuch a diſcovery patiently? I I tremble to think how much he may reſent it.

Har. Oh! my dear Henry, let no fears of that kind diſturb you; take my word for it, though his lordſhip does not think himſelf too old to make love to a young woman, he will feel himſelf quite ſuperannuated, when fighting a young man is in queſtion; and I ſuppoſe you are afraid of no expreſſions of his reſentment, that are not carried at the point of his ſword,

Mrs.

Mrs. Hen. No, I cannot ſay that I much regard any others. But ſuppoſe Lady Edmonds ſhould not find it neceſſary to divulge the ſecret, what are you to do then?

Har. From that apprehenſion I endeavoured to fix the term of my eccleircifſement with his lordſhip at the diſtance of three months, but the ardour of his paſſion would not ſuffer ſo long a delay, and rather than loſe an opportunity of ſerving my Emily's ſiſter, I determined to run the hazard of an earlier day. Circumſtanced as our family now is, I think it greatly improbable that a

discovery can be avoided; but should it be so, I fancy I may venture to trust his lordship, who will rather keep my secret, than expose himself to the ridicule of so strange a disappointment.

Mrs. Hen. All things considered, perhaps the hazard is not so great as my fears represent it. But the perplexity of my mind will not suffer me to see any thing clearly. I am anxious to hear how affairs go on at your father's; but on my last attempt to see my lady, was refused admittance; the servants told me their master had forbidden them

to

to let me in, and while he was in the houſe, they durſt not diſobey him.

Har. You may believe I am not leſs anxious, but it is a great relief in the preſent perturbation of my mind to have ſomething to draw off my thoughts from ſo painful a ſubject, and to have the gratification of contributing to the happineſs of ſome of my friends, though I cannot procure my own, nor what is dearer to me, my mother's. I will inſtantly ſend to Lord Leſſingham to meet me at Mr. Martin's, and will acquaint Miſs Caroline with the favourable turn in her affairs. If you receive any intelligence from my father's, you will be ſo

good as to communicate it to me without delay.

Mrs. Hen. You may depend upon me. [*Exeunt.*

ACT

ACT V.

SCENE I.

A ROOM IN SIR JEFFERY'S HOUSE.

JAMES, *with an open letter in his Hand.*

IS this the reward of my long ſervices? wicked, baſe man! —— to ruin my only child! my poor Nancy! — nay,

to

to murder her too! for that was nearly the caſe. —— A raſcal! — a villain. — I will be revenged; — and I can too. — Yes — yes, he ſhall ſuffer; — I will have that comfort — but that will not ſave my girl; —— ſhe may die for all that; —— poor child, poor child; I cannot bear to loſe her —— my ſweet dear Nancy —— [*Weeps.*

SCENE

SCENE II.

Enter Mr. HENBURY.

Mr. HENBURY.

HOW now, Mr. James? in tears, man? what is the matter with you? I did not think you ſubject to whimpering.

James.

James. The ſtouteſt man in the world would cry if he had the cauſe for it that I have; but upon my ſoul I will not be the only one that ſhall cry. May I be damn'd if I am not revenged.

Mr. Hen. Hum — that is not a very ſaving courſe, I think. —— But if any real misfortune has befallen you, I ſincerely pity you. I would offer my endeavours to ſerve you, but your maſter is too much your friend to ſuffer you to want any other.

James. My maſter! Eternal vengeance ſeize him, he is the cauſe of all my

my ſorrow. —— The raſcal — the vile raſcal — he ſhall ſuffer for it.

Mr. Hen. But what has he done? how can he have ſo violently exaſperated you?

James. I don't love to publiſh my own ſhame; but you will know it; you are a good man, and will pity me; that is ſome conſolation. I have juſt received this letter from my wife, read it, read it. — You will ſee all there.

Mr. Hen. [*After reading the letter.*] Horrible wretch! not only to ſeduce your daughter, but in order to prevent

the consequences, run the hazard of murdering her! It is almost too wicked to believe it possible.

James. Oh! nothing is too wicked for him;——murder is nothing to him—the devil himself is not more wicked; that I know well enough; but I did not think he would have served me so, after all I have done for him.

Mr. Hen. [*Aside.*] (Something useful may perhaps be gathered from this man's anger.) Mr. James, I pity you with all my heart; yet, perhaps he has never injured any one who had less reason to complain; have not you often assisted

him

him in amours equally criminal? And thus helped to fix the same dagger in the heart of other parents that now pierces your own?

James. I am afraid I have, I am afraid I have. Oh! Sir, do not remind me of my guilt. I am now paid home for it all.

Mr. Hen. So will the man ever be who acts the under part to a villain. After assisting your master in the perpetration of so long a course of iniquities, you have no reason to wonder you are at last a victim to that wickedness from which you should have fled; but

if

if his bad example corrupted your mind, let this his laſt crime have a ſalutary effect, and prove the antidote to the poiſon you have ſo long imbibed. Let the ſenſe of the injury you have received, bring with it a ſenſe of your guilt, in ſo long conniving at actions equally criminal; and from what you ſuffer, learn to repent for the evil you have brought on others. Thus ſhall your preſent misfortune, which is but too juſtly befallen you, become a bleſſing; and the only true happineſs ariſe from your diſtreſs.

James. Alas! Sir, I feel the truth of what you ſay. I confeſs my conſcience has

has often reproached me for my guilty compliances with the vile man's orders, but I never thoroughly knew my own guilt till now; for I did not imagine human nature could feel the anguish that now tears my heart. But my grief has a particular aggravation; the ingratitude of the wretch who has injured me, who has made so vile a return for all my long and diligent services.

Mr. Hen. Your sufferings have indeed an heavy aggravation, but not that you mention. You have no just demand of gratitude from him; the man who facilitates our commission of sin, is our worst enemy. If you were stand-

ing

ing on the brink of a precipice, ſhould you think yourſelf obliged to the man who puſhed you down it? or, if ſome ſudden paſſion awakened in you a deſire to ſwallow poiſon, would any gratitude be due to the man who bought it for you? Juſt ſo much your maſter owes to you.

James. But if my ſervices have been wicked, at leaſt they have been faithful.

Mr. Hen. But to what could he ſuppoſe he owed your fidelity? Either to mercenary views, or a ſtrange depravity of nature. He ſaw you ungrateful to

the power who had given you present being, and who offered you an eternity of happiness: he saw you unfaithful to him who had endowed you with useful talents, in the very criminal use you made of them: how then could he either depend on your fidelity, or hope for your gratitude?

James. Oh! Sir, you wound me to the heart. I have indeed been ungrateful to my Maker, and unfaithful to the trust he reposed in me; I have nothing but wretchedness to expect in this life; and to think of the next is horror and madness.

Mr. Hen. Do not imagine I would have urged your guilt only to add to your diſtreſs. —— No — it is only the impenitent ſinner whoſe caſe is hopeleſs. But you muſt not miſtake your preſent ſorrow for penitence; men naturally quarrel with their ſins while they are ſuffering under the conſequences of them; but thoſe are tranſient emotions, and ariſe from an averſion to pain, not from the awakening of virtue. We cannot be certain of the ſincerity of our repentance till it appears in our actions; and the firſt to which we ought to apply ourſelves, is an endeavour to repair the injuries we have done.

James.

James. Alas! that is not in my power; you ſtop me at the very threſhold; can I refund money that I never received? can I reſtore innocence to the ſeduced; or recal infants into being? If theſe are the principal works of penitence, penitence is not for me, but revenge is; — I can be revenged — and I will make the villain more wretched than I am.

Mr. Hen. To bring a villain to judgement, may, perhaps, be a duty, but if it be undertaken only out of revenge, you but increaſe your own guilt; and after all, what puniſhment can you get inflicted on your maſter? Though the

ſeduction

ſeduction of innocent women is one of the greateſt of crimes, yet the law takes no cognizance of it; had your daughter died, indeed, you might have proſecuted him for murder; and if you could not have capitally convicted him, you might have diſgraced him.

James. No new death is requiſite to enable me to convict him of murder; I have charges enough of that kind againſt him, to condemn him, and revenge me.

Enter

Enter Mr. EDMONDS, *who retires back unſeen by Mr.* HENDERSON *and* JAMES.

Mr. Hen. Charges of murder againſt him! Is that poſſible? can he be ſo very great a villain? I will puſh him farther. He ſeems to have been deep in his maſter's ſecrets. [*Aſide.*

James. There is no villainy too great for him; and the blackeſt crimes coſt him nothing. I ſpeak from my own knowledge, it is not on ſuſpicion that I would accuſe him, I know the whole but too well. The years that have elap-

ſed ſince, will not ſave him from my vengeance; I can ſtill bring ſufficient proof.

——

Mr. Hen. You ſurprize and ſhock me. Who were the victims of his malice?

James. More the victims of his avarice than of his malice. I will tell you all, Sir, if you will put me in a way to bring him to juſtice, without expoſing myſelf to danger; though I think I could contentedly meet death, if I could but ſee him ſuffer firſt.

Mr. Hen. You may depend on my beſt advice: ſo deteſtable a crime ſhould not

not escape punishment. [*Aside.*] How unsearchable are thy ways, oh! Providence. Thou makest the wicked to entangle himself in his own snares. —— Go with me to my chamber, and we will there consider coolly on the most prudent method of proceeding.

James. A thousand thanks to you, Sir. The hope of vengeance is a cordial to my heart.

Mr. Hen. These are sentiments, friend, which I hope to prevail with you to conquer; but your present too just resentment makes this no proper season, to endeavour it. When you are more

calm, I truſt you will think differently. Let us retire; my chamber is more private.

James. I attend you, Sir. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE

SCENE III.

Enter Mr. EDMONDS.

AM I awake? am in my ſenſes? Is it poſſible that villain ſhould betray me? he who has ever been my ready aſſiſtant, in whom I could never diſcover the leaſt compunction? the leaſt

hesitation?——I——What can have moved him to this?——at a time too when he had reason to expect to be rewarded for all his services; for hitherto I have led him on by hope, as the surest means of continuing him in my service, and securing his secrecy.——He must have discovered my intrigue with his daughter.——Fool! Why should he suppose that she alone was sacred? as if I had not the same right to her as to many others he has procured for me.——Yet I wish the girl had been less handsome, that I might have escaped this danger.——What can I do!——I tremble at his anger.——If he indeed has proof, I am undone.——He says

he

he can convict me. —— It is too poſſible. —— Yet his teſtimony alone will not be ſufficient, even though corroborated by Lady Edmonds's ſuſpicions. —— But he may have more evidence —— the apothecary —— or perhaps the nurſe. —— Hell and furies! Death ſeems to threaten me on every ſide. I almoſt feel the fetters on my legs, and wherever I turn my eyes, I ſee nothing but gibbets. It were madneſs to wait the event of his conſultation with that formal fool. —— Let me rather take the advantage of my good fortune in overhearing his treacherous deſigns. —— But what can I hope from flight? —a ſlower death. —— Starving muſt

be my portion. —— Had I but compleated my plan, my enemies might have done their worſt. — Every Kingdom is the rich man's home; but to a poor one the moſt populous city is a deſart. The proſecution going forward againſt me, together with Jack Allerton's reſentment, had determined me to leave England as ſoon as I could ſecure to myſelf a ſufficient part of my brother's fortune; had this diſcovery but been delayed till then! —— But my flattering proſpects are vaniſhed, and what have I got by all my induſtry and arts? I have defrauded others indeed of money, but I have cheated myſelf of happineſs. —— My life is at this

moment

moment ſuſpended on a thread;—— while I am endeavouring to contrive ſome means of preventing its being deſtroyed by famine, I am expoſing it to the danger of being ended by a ſhameful death. Curſed fortune! how haſt thou bubbled me at laſt! I have ſought thee through infamy and guilt; I have ſacrificed to thee conſcience, honour, virtue, my own peace, and the eſteem of others; and all thou giveſt me in return is ſhame and poverty.—— The deſtraction of my mind is ſo great, it will not even ſuffer me to invent ſome means of getting at leaſt a preſent ſupply of caſh.—— What I do, muſt be done inſtantly.—My brother is ready

to ſet off on his journey — but mine muſt be performed alone. —— I trifle too long; my perplexity will betray me into the gripe of the blood-hounds, who will ſoon be in full cry after me. —— I almoſt hear them already. —— But when I have eſcaped them, who ſhall deliver me from my own remorſe, and the hatred of others! from ignominy, from contempt, from poverty! —— Oh! miſerable ſtate of him, who ſeeks for happineſs through the paths of guilt. —— Wretch that I am! nothing but horror and miſery await me. —— One black dark ſcene only opens to my view. —— No ray of comfort — no ſmiling hope to chear me on the

dreary

dreary way I am to go. —— Diſtreſs and wretchedneſs muſt ever be my portion. —— Unpitied —— unrelieved —— perſecuted by man —— abhorred by heaven. —— Oh! fool! fool! fool! to barter integrity for wealth! innocence for luxury! Too late I feel my folly. [*Exit.*

SCENE

SCENE IV.

SCENE CHANGES TO MR. MARTIN'S LODGING.

Mr. MARTIN, *and* EMILIA *weeping.*

EMILIA.

I Will obey you, Sir, since it must be so: I had rather be unhappy than disobedient.

Mr.

Mr. Mar. As you know how much I hate an unwilling compliance, you do very right, Emilia, in obeying me with ſo good a grace; if you conſented with viſible reluctance, you would loſe all the merit of obedience, as it would appear rather the effect of fear, than of affectionate ſubmiſſion to my will.

Em. Dear Sir, do not wound me in this manner. I do all that is in my power to oblige you; ſince you command it, I will give my hand to Sir Richard; but it is impoſſible for me to conceal how much that proof of my obedience coſts me. Pardon my reluctance, in conſideration of that duty

which is strong enough to conquer it; and be kind enough to spare my heart the additional pain your oblique reproaches give it. We are none of us absolute masters of our inclinations, mine are not in my power, but my hand is, and that shall be bestowed according to your direction. Thus, Sir, as far as mortal power can reach, yours is absolute over me. Can you desire more?

Mr. Mar. No; it is sufficient; in compliance with my command you give your hand; and I have no doubt, but in return to Sir Richard's fondness, you will give your heart. As love is not eternal,

eternal, it is well to have none of it wafted before marriage, yours will come faft enough after it, and will laft the longer.

SCENE

SCENE V.

Enter Miss HARRIET EDMONDS.

YOUR servant, young lady; you are come very opportunely to learn an useful lesson of obedience from my daughter. Had you been taught it sooner, you would now be in a happier situation than I fear you are.

Har.

Har. If you allude, Sir, to my having had the misfortune to diſoblige my father, I will aſſure you, that were I at liberty to tell all my reaſons for refuſing to marry Lord Leſſingham; you, with all the world, would juſtify me, and acknowledge it was the only part I could act; and I flatter myſelf I ſhall be one day happy enough to hear you approve it.

Mr. Mar. I am glad of it; whatever may be the event, it is always a good thing to have the teſtimony of our own conſcience in our favour. But I will leave you; I know girls are fond of talking of huſbands, and weddings,

and

and fine cloaths, and jewels, and all the nonſenſical trumpery attending marriage. You are come in a good time to give Emily your advice on thoſe important articles; I leave you to ſettle what colours will beſt become her complexion, and what ſilks ſhew her ſhape to the beſt advantage. She is ſo happy in the proſpect of her approaching marriage, that you will find her in fine ſpirits; I dare ſay you will be excellent company; but though I ſhould have pleaſure in hearing your lively chat, yet my preſence might conſtrain you; ſo adieu. [*Exit.*

Har.

Har. What does your father mean, my Emily? you have not really conſented to marry Sir Richard?

Em. Indeed I have. My father inſiſted ſo peremptorily upon it, that I durſt no longer reſiſt his will.

Har. Oh! it is mighty well — as you liked Sir Richard, to be ſure you did very rightly. —— You had pretended indeed, that he was diſagreeable to you, and I was fool enough to believe it: —— but I ſee now that was meer affectation. [*Walks about.*

Em.

Em. Cruel Harriet! how can you inſult my diſtreſs? I did not expect this addition to my ſorrow. All my hope of conſolation was in you. I believed your friendly compaſſion would ſoothe me, and your reaſon ſupport my drooping ſpirits. But ſince you can be unkind, no comfort remains for me.

[*Weeping.*

Har. Pardon me, my love; I know not what I ſaid. Are you indeed diſtreſſed? is your conſent to this marriage only the effort of ſuperior virtue? and are you then a victim to filial duty? ——I ſee you are — thoſe flowing tears are certain evidences of it. [*Sits down*

by

by her.] Lay your hand on my boſom, Emilia, you will find my heart beats uniſon with yours, and partakes of all your ſorrows.

Em. Now you are again my Harriet; my deareſt, my tendereſt friend. Oh! inſpire me with fortitude to compleat my promiſe, and teach me to acquit myſelf as I ought of the duties of this odious engagement.

Har. I aſſiſt you to perform ſuch a promiſe! no, my lovely, my deareſt Emily, never ſhall you be torn from theſe arms to be given to thoſe of another; here will I keep you for ever encircled,

encircled, and while I fondly preſs you to my heart ——

Em. [*Breaks from her arms, and riſes.*] Harriet, are you diſtracted? what do you mean?

Har. I mean, that Sir Richard ſhall find that he muſt deprive me of my life, before he ſhall rob me of you.

Em. You terrify me. I ſee your diſtreſſes have ſhaken your reaſon; I wiſh I had diſſembled my grief, that I might not have increaſed the agitation of your ſpirits. Sit down, my dear, and compoſe yourſelf. I thought you had too

much ſtrength of mind to have been ſo ſubdued by diſtreſs.

Har. Oh! my Emily! I am not mad, but you may well believe it. Love, indeed, that moment, got the better of my reaſon, but it has not totally dethroned it. I have put myſelf under a neceſſity to divulge a ſecret which only can account for my conduct, and prove that I am no lunatic. Know then that you, and all the world, are deceived in my ſex, and that I am no woman.

Em. Not a woman! good heavens!

Har.

Har. The cauſe of the concealment of my ſex you ſhall know hereafter; let me now tell you, that I have hitherto hidden the moſt ardent love, under the name of friendſhip; that I cannot live and ſee you in the arms of another. Think, my angel, what I muſt have ſuffered through all the progreſs of Luton's courtſhip; a thouſand times has the ſecret riſen to my lips, and with the greateſt difficulty have I ſuppreſſed the too warm expreſſions of my love to you, and my reſentment againſt him; but the ſituation wherein I now found you, threw me quite off my guard, the fear of having you torn from me, ſilenced every other conſideration;

and

and having hazarded the diſcovery for the ſake of your ſiſter; my love for you has forced me to a plain declaration of it.

Em. You have now compleated my misfortune. I hoped at leaſt to have enjoyed the pleaſures of friendſhip, and to have found relief in your ſociety, till I could bring my perverſe heart to a proper ſenſibility towards my huſband; but even that is now denied me; and I am condemned to that joyleſs inſipidity, which muſt be the lot of a perſon whoſe affections have no object; for here our acquaintance muſt end.

Har. Your meaning cannot be ſo cruel as your words.

Em. I am not at liberty to chuſe; you muſt be ſenſible that I ſhould be equally wanting in my duty to myſelf, and to the man who muſt be my huſband, were I to continue the leaſt intercourſe with you. No, Harriet, permit me to call you ſo a few minutes longer; by preſerving your acquaintance I ſhould not take the means of reconciling myſelf to my fate; my heart would be but the more refractory. I have begun the ſacrifice, and I muſt compleat it; here therefore let us part. The beſt wiſhes

wiſhes of the tender friendſhip I have ever felt for you, will attend you thro' every ſeaſon of our lives, but from this inſtant I diſclaim all converſation with you; and if you really love me, you will not oppoſe a reſolution ſo neceſſary to my peace.

Har. Cruel Emilia! can you thus condemn to a life of wretchedneſs, the perſon for whom you have profeſſed the ſincereſt friendſhip?

Em. You are not the perſon to whom I profeſſed it; Harriet Edmonds was my friend, if you are not the one, you can no longer be the other. I have

moſt reaſon to complain; you have deceived me into an affection that muſt render me unhappy, but it ſhall not render me criminal. If I do not reproach you, who have done wrong, ſurely you may ſpare me, who only do my duty.

Har. Oh! my Emily! your affection for me cannot be ſufficient to give you much pain, if it will not prevent your marrying Sir Richard.

Em. I do not want to perſuade you it is great, there would be cruelty in it, of which I would not willingly be guilty, though the injury you have done

done in giving rise to that affection, might excuse my punishing you; but if I loved you with all the tenderness a heart can feel, I see not how it could prevent my marriage; duty required my consent, and by giving it, I have now engaged my honour beyond all possibility of retracting.

Har. You have not given your word to Sir Richard?

Em. No; but to my father I have, and that, if possible, is still more binding.

Har. My life, my angel, if you would not drive me to distraction, grant me one favour: give me leave to try if I cannot prevail on Mr. Martin to accept me instead of Sir Richard; my fortune will be superior, my birth is at least equal; surely if you will but join with me, and confess a preference in my favour, he cannot refuse our request.

Em. The secret you talked of is then one no longer.

Har. Alas! in my distraction I forgot, that possibly I am not yet at liberty to declare it. I shall soon know how

that may be. I think my affairs are now come to ſuch a criſis, that it muſt be made known to my father; and if ſo, I am at liberty to all the world: but, my deareſt life, only avoid confirming the conſent you have given, till I can learn what has paſſed at home in regard to me; and if I ſhould find my diſguiſe is yet a ſecret there, I will endeavour to obtain my mother's permiſſion to declare it at leaſt to Mr. Martin, ſince my very exiſtence depends on this trial.

Em. I know not how far it will be in my power to comply with your requeſt; I am too much at my father's

command to anſwer for myſelf; and I fear your attempt can be to no purpoſe; of all the men in the world he is the leaſt likely to break his word.

Har. For heaven's ſake do not deprive me of hope, it is depriving me of life.

Em. On one condition I will, in compliance with your deſire, endeavour to avoid ſeeing either my father or Sir Richard.

Har. Name your condition, and if poſſibly I can, I will grant it.

Em.

Em. It is, that, if you fail in your attempt of prevailing with my father, you will, without murmuring, acquiesce in the cessation of our acquaintance.

Har. Cruel condition! It is requiring me to sacrifice my life; but it is yours, and I shall never hesitate at relinquishing it at your command.

Em. Why will you distress me thus? I beseech you leave me. Let me at least preserve the appearance of fortitude. Leave me, leave me.

Har. I obey: but remember my life is in your hand; for be assured I could not long survive the loss of you. Dearest of women, adieu.

[*Kisses her hand, and exit.*

Em. [*Sinking into a chair.*] How wretched is my fate! Reduced to banish the friend of my heart, to disclaim the dear society I have so long delighted in, and to be united in the closest connexion with a man I do not like. What could so much have added to my unhappiness, as this strange disguise of

my friend's? Had I known him to be a man, I ſhould never have indulged ſo tender an affection, nor have allowed him opportunity to give riſe to it: had he been really a woman, I might ſtill have enjoyed his friendſhip, and have therein found a ſource of happineſs in the midſt of all my misfortunes. But tho' I loved him, only believing him a woman, yet I find my affection will not ceaſe with that perſuaſion; the exceſs of his tenderneſs rather increaſes mine, and he becomes more dear to me by the neceſſity I am under of diſclaiming his ſociety. I wiſh much to know the motive for his diſguiſe, but I dared not

truſt myſelf with a continuance of the converſation; I found that I could no longer ſuppreſs my tenderneſs.

SCENE

SCENE VI.

Enter Miss CAROLINE.

CAROLINE.

IS Harriet gone?

Em. She has just left me.

Car.

Car. I wished to have acknowledged my obligations to her, when I could have done it more freely.

Em. What obligations?

Car. Did not she tell you what she had done for me?

Em. She did not even mention you.

Car. It is plain the obligation she has conferred, touched her much less than it has done me, or she could not have been silent upon it.

Em.

Em. Pray what is it?

Car. Nothing less than obtaining Lord Bruton's consent to his son's marriage with me.

Em. You amaze me! how was that possible?

Car. The means are no less extraordinary than the consequences. Lord Bruton, who it seems is as susceptible of the power of beauty as at five and twenty, has fallen desperately in love with Harriet, and most importunately sollicited her favour. She took advantage

tage of the violence of his paſſion, and obtained a conſent to our marriage, written with his own hand, in return for a promiſe ſhe made him of marrying him at the end of the month, if he continued equally deſirous of it.

Em. Harriet, promiſe to marry Lord Bruton!

Car. Even ſo; but when ſhe mentioned this circumſtance, ſhe, ſmiling, told Lord Leſſingham to be under no apprehenſions of having a long jointure to pay her, for though ſhe deſigned keeping her word with Lord Bruton, yet ſhe did not think ſhe ſhould ever be

be our mother-in-law: ſo I ſuppoſe ſhe has ſome ſcheme of diſguſting his lordſhip, to make him releaſe her from her engagements: but I fear that may not be as eaſily effected as imagined; old lovers are very pertinacious, they are not eaſily ſhaken off.

Em. When did all this paſs?

Car. While my father and you were in private conference. Uneaſy on your account, and melancoly on my own, I was walking about my room in a pretty ſtrong fit of the vapours, when I ſaw Harriet approaching the houſe. She beckoned to me, and I went to her.

She

She caught me by the hand, and hurried me into the grove, where she had left Lord Lessingham waiting for the interview, after having acquainted him with what she had done for us; and leaving him to explain it fully to me, she came to you.

Em. Will Lord Bruton keep his word, think you?

Car. Harriet advises us to take immediate advantage of it, offering to prevail on Lord Bruton to accompany her at our nuptials, that his presence may give such a sanction to them, as he cannot afterwards retract; and Lord

Lessingham

Leſſingham is now with my father, endeavouring to obtain his conſent.

Em. I wiſh he may find no difficulty in obtaining it.

Car. I hope not. My father to be ſure is very ſteady to his purpoſes, (if he diſappoints me in this, I will change the word ſteadineſs for obſtinacy) but it ſeldom blinds him to intereſt; and that is ſo much on the ſide of Lord Leſſingham's ſuit, that I flatter myſelf he will find out, that his lordſhip has always been poſſeſſed of his higheſt eſteem and favour.

Em.

Em. Your hope is not ill founded; he is not apt to be defective in prudence.

Car. I am afraid of asking you the result of your *tété a tété* with him.

Em. And I am almost afraid of telling you; I tremble at the thought; and can scarcely bear to hear the sound from my own lips, that I have promised to obey him, when he commands me to marry Sir Richard.

Car. I grieve to hear it; for though Sir Richard is certainly not a disagreeable, and, I believe, not a bad man, yet,

yet, as you diſlike him, it is tyranny to inſiſt on your being united to him for life. Is it impoſſible, think you, my dear ſiſter, to conquer your averſeneſs, I will not call it averſion, to him?

Em. Indeed I fear it is. —— [*Aſide.*] She knows not the chief cauſe, nor ought I to tell it her; my Harriet's ſecrets muſt be ſacred to me; but how ſhould I conquer my diſlike to Sir Richard, when a compariſon ſo much to his diſadvantage will be continually occurring to me!

Car.

Car. To ſee my Emilia ſo penſive and dejected, caſts a gloom over the bright proſpect which my good fortune preſents to my view. My happineſs muſt be very imperfect, if my ſiſter is not happy.

Em. You cannot doubt but your being ſo will greatly alleviate my vexations; and, dejected as I am, I feel ſo lively an intereſt in your affairs as to be very anxious to know the ſtate of the conference between our father and Lord Leſſingham.

Car.

Car. They are in the back parlour; if we take a turn or two in the garden, we may get ſuch a glimpſe of their countenances, as will enable us to gueſs whether the converſation is amicably carried on; and to find it ſo, will go far towards calming the perturbation of my ſpirits.

Em. The thought is a good one; if we can ſee their faces, we may from thence form a tolerable judgment of the ſtate of their minds. I attend you. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE

SCENE VII.

SCENE CHANGES TO SIR JEFFERY'S HOUSE.

Enter Sir JEFFERY, *followed by two or three Servants.*

Sir JEFFERY.

ROBBED! plundered! my buroe broke open! fetch a conſtable. —— An hundred and twenty guineas ſtolen!

ſtolen! Go for a warrant. —— I will find the villain — he ſhall ſwing for it —— Let the chaiſe be put up —— I will not leave the place till I have unkennel'd the thief. —— Where is my brother? did I not bid you deſire him to come to me? He will tell me what courſe I had beſt take.

Thomas. I have ſought every where, an pleaſe your honour, and he is not in the houſe, nor *nobody* can tell *nothing* about him.

Sir Jeff. Where is James? it may be he can tell.

Thomas. I did aſk James, an pleaſe your honour, but I *does* not dare to tell your honour what James ſaid, becauſe *as how* your honour *mought* be angry with me, for ſpeaking ſuch words.

Sir Jeff. If ſo be in caſe you only ſay what ſome body elſe ſaid to you, I won't be angry, ſo you may tell me.

Thomas. Why to be ſure, an pleaſe your honour, James was in a great fuſs, and a great quandary, and ſaid *as how* he hoped he was not run away, except he was run to the devil; for he would have

have hanged him if he had ſtaid, and he ſhould have been glad to have had the hanging of him; and called him a power of bad names.

Sir Jeff. Oh! the villain! the reprobate! to ſpeak ſo of my brother. Where can he be! he won't be out long; we ſhould have ſet out above an hour ago, if waiting for him I had not fallen into a doze, and overſlept myſelf. Is there nobody can adviſe me?

Serv. Would your honour have me call Mr. Henbury.

Sir Jeff. Why, yes, you may call him, he is better than nobody.

[*Exit Servant.*

Sir Jeff. Is my wife gone away?

Thomas. No, an pleaſe your honour, I hear'd Mrs. Patty ſay *as how* her lady was ſo ill, ſhe was not able to leave the houſe.

SCENE

SCENE VIII.

Enter COACHMAN.

COACHMAN.

AN't like your honour your beſt horſe is gone out of the ſtable. I did but as it were juſt turn my back to carry poor old Dobben to be ſhod,

for poor old ſoul he wears out his ſhoes deſperate faſt; and when I came back I miſſed the bay-filly; I thought may-hap ſome of the men mought have taken her out to go of ſome meſſage; but when I came to enquire, they are all at home, and *nobody knows nothing* about it.

Sir Jeff. What will become of me! where will this end! my buroe broke open! my beſt horſe ſtolen! the horſe I valued ſo too!

Coachm. And ſo did I, I am ſure; our old coach-mare was her dam, and night and day I nurſed it. I am ſure I loved

I loved it as well as if it was my own brother. —— Poor fool! it had the prettieſt fore-hand! and would go the pureſt tiff-up! Oh! I ſhall never ſee its like again! It was a jewel of a horſe. A man muſt have a heart of ſtone that would not grieve for the loſs of it.

Sir Jeff. Indeed, indeed, it is enough to make any body grieve.

Coachm. The parſon told us laſt Sunday, that the world is full of misfortunes, and ſo I find; I did not uſe to think it was ſo bad a place, but I now feel what wretched creatures we men are. —— Well, to be ſure, this is the

moſt unfortunable day I ever ſaw, except the day my poor dear wife died; and yet, I don't know how it is, I think I was not ſo ſadly ſorry as for the loſs of this pretty filly. A man may get another wife, if ſo be he be ſo minded, but I ſhall never bleſs my eyes with ſuch a ſweet towardly filly again.

SCENE

SCENE IX.

Enter Mr. HENBURY.

Sir JEFFERY.

HERE's ſtrange things going forward, Mr. Henbury, very ſtrange things; what will the wickedneſs of this

world come to? My buroe is robbed, my ſtable is robbed, and I don't know whether I am not robbed every where.

Mr. Hen. It is very ſtrange indeed, Sir.

Sir Jeff. I did not ſend for you to tell me that; I know all that without you; I ſent for you to tell me how I may get them again.

Mr. Hen. I wiſh that were in my power, Sir, but it is no very eaſy matter. The firſt ſtep we have to take, is to endeavour to diſcover who it is that has committed theſe robberies.

Sir

Sir Jeff. This is what I want to know.

Mr. Hen. Neither of the thefts could eaſily have been committed at this time of the day, but by ſome one in the houſe; it will therefore be proper to ſee who is miſſing; for it is plain enough that the perſon who broke open your buroe, is gone off on the horſe you have loſt.

Sir Jeff. So it is; let us call over all the ſervants, it muſt be one of them.

Coachm. But it is not though, an like your honour; here are all your men, but Bob Poſtillion, and I left him in the

the ſtable; and all the maids were together talking the matter over in the kitchen when I came to your honour; not that any woman-body could eaſily have rode away with bay-filley.

Mr. Hen. The only perſon miſſing, permit me to ſay it, Sir Jeffery, is Mr. Edmonds. I am ſenſible it muſt ſeem ſtrange to you to hear me expreſs a ſuſpicion that a man of his faſhion, a brother ſo much eſteemed by you, could be guilty of ſo mean a crime as robbery; but I can bring you proofs of actions of his ſo much more criminal, that this will appear a mere trifling fault.

Sir

Sir Jeff. It is impoſſible. My brother is the moſt honourable man in the world, and none but a villain would abuſe him. Your malice will be all loſt upon me, I can tell you that, for I will hear no more of it.

Mr. Hen. Pardon me, Sir, but you muſt hear it, it concerns you nearly; and it will explain to you the reaſon of his flight.

Sir Jeff. I tell you I will not hear you; this is ſome vile ſcheme of my wife's, you and ſhe have plotted together to ſcandalize him. Why ſhould

he

he rob me, when if ſo be, in caſe, he had aſked for more than he has taken, he ſhould have had it directly.

Mr. Hen. There ſeems to be great reaſon, Sir, in what you ſay, but the truth is, he could not ſtay to make the requeſt. The event ſhews, that he muſt have overheard his ſervant, James, informing me of a long ſeries of his villanies, and among the reſt, of his poiſoning your ſons in their infancy; and as he knew James had ſtronger proofs of theſe facts than his word, he judged it neceſſary to ſecure his ſafety by flight; and he ſeems to have been willing to provide, to the beſt of his power,

power, one requiſite for travelling with convenience.

Sir Jeff. How dare you perſiſt in ſuch infamous ſcandal? my wife ought to be aſhamed of having any hand in trumping up ſuch a lie.

Mr. Hen. It is ſtrange that any man ſhould be obliged to defend ſuch a woman as Lady Edmonds, againſt aſperſions thrown on her by her huſband, who ought beſt to know her merit; but, Sir, I muſt take the liberty of ſaying, that you will be ſoon convinced, ſhe is the moſt injured, as well as the beſt of women. You certainly ought

ought not to believe any accuſation of Mr. Edmonds, on my word; but I can bring you ſuch unqueſtionable proofs of what I have ſaid, that it will be no longer in your power to doubt the truth of it. Give me leave, Sir, to wait on you into my lady's dreſſing-room, and there you ſhall hear every circumſtance of this dreadful villainy; and by your preſence you will adminiſter the beſt conſolation ſhe can receive in the preſent diſtreſſed ſtate of her mind.

Sir Jeff. You amaze, you terrify me. I don't know what to do—well, I will go with you, but I cannot believe it. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE

SCENE X.

SCENE CHANGES TO HARRIET'S LODGING.

RRIET *and Mrs.* HENBURY.

HARRIET.

HOW cruel is this ſuſpence! ſhall we never hear what is going forward at home? My father is not gone to London, you ſay?

Mrs.

Mrs. Hen. He certainly is not. William, to whom I had given in charge to watch Sir Jeffery's door, ſays, that after the chaiſe had waited a long time, it was driven back, and ſet up again: that by the ſervants frequently paſſing the windows, they ſeemed to be running about the houſe in great confuſion; but he durſt not go near enough to enquire the cauſe.

Har. I fear ſome illneſs of my mother's may be the occaſion of it, and that may have ſtopped my father's journey; for were ſhe very ill, he could not be ſo inhuman as to leave the

the place. Whatever may be the conſequence, I muſt learn the ſtate of her health.

Mrs. Hen. I believe your fears are ill-founded, for William ſaw my huſband at the parlour-window, and ſays he has not ſeen him look ſo chearful for ſome days paſt; and this I am ſure would not be the caſe, if Lady Edmonds had any alarming diſorder.

Har. Of that I am very ſenſible; but William might be miſtaken; one cannot depend on an obſervation formed from ſo ſlight, and ſo diſtant a view. My mind is on the rack, I fear

fear for my mother the consequences of my father's knowing the deceit that has been put upon him; and I shall fear more for myself, his not being made acquainted with it.

Mrs. Hen. The time indeed is critical to you.

Her. It is so to the last degree. A few days may fix my wretchedness for life. To be received with fondness, as my father's heir, would be of no consequence to me, if it be not time enough to prevent my Emily's marriage. If I lose her, fortune can give me no pleasure.

Mrs.

Mrs. Hen. Should the diſcovery even be made already, I fear it will be too late, Mr. Martin having engaged his word to Sir Richard.

Har. I know Mr. Martin's obſtinacy; but yet, were I at liberty to act, I would not deſpair of ſucceſs; a lover is ſtill a more obſtinate being than an old man; and he ſhould find it very difficult to marry his daughter to another, though he might refuſe to give her to me. Beſide, ſurely ſome gratitude is due to the perſon who has formed an union ſo neceſſary to his youngeſt daughter's happineſs, ſo advanta-

geous to her fortune, and ſo honourable to his family. Lord Bruton has promiſed to ſee his ſon and Miſs Caroline united to-morrow.

Mrs. Hen. Indeed I think the old man is bound in duty to reward you with Emily's hand; but perhaps his pride will not ſuffer him to eſtimate the obligation ſo highly as it deſerves; and you cannot expect Lord Bruton will plead in your favour.

Har. No; I confeſs I cannot expect much benefit from him; but ſurely I may depend on all the intereſt of Lord Leſſingham and his bride. Gratitude

to me, and love to Emily, muſt both operate in my favour: I cannot doubt having ſome intereſt in her heart, and I am ſure of her diſinclination to Sir Richard.

Mrs. Hen. I think I pity that man; whether he does, or does not obtain her, he is but in an aukward ſituation.

Har. I ſhould feel great compaſſion for him, were his love more generous and delicate; but what can one ſay for a man who perſiſts in endeavouring to obtain a woman's hand contrary to her inclination; he knows how averſe

ſhe

ſhe is to marrying him; to take advantage of her father's power is inſufferably ungenerous.

Mrs. Hen. I ſuppoſe he will plead the violence of his love, and tell you he cannot live without her.

Har. It muſt be love for himſelf then, and in the violence of that there is no great merit; if he loved her he could not wiſh to render her unhappy. Where there is ſo little generoſity there can be no real affection, nor much of any other virtue; and how dreary is the proſpect of that woman's future days, who puts her happineſs into the power of a man who

who thinks only of his own gratification, and to procure it, will not ſcruple making her wretched.

Mrs. Hen. The man who acts on ſuch principles muſt find himſelf diſappointed; for in no very intimate connexion can one party be happy, if the other is not ſo.

Har. Not permanent happineſs, but preſent gratification, is the thing ſought by perſons who are devoid of delicacy and generoſity. Indeed it is all they are capable of enjoying; they are ſtrangers to the refinements on which our

ſublimeſt pleaſures depend; they are formed only for animal life, and the mind has little to do either in their pains or pleaſures. Can ſuch a man dare to contend with me for my Emily?

SCENE

SCENE XI.

Enter SERVANT.

SERVANT.

MADAM, Lady Edmonds desires you will come to her directly.

Har. Where is ſhe? is ſhe well?

Serv. All that John knows, Madam, is, that Sir Jeffery and ſhe were together at their lodgings; and that ſhe looked very joyful when ſhe gave him the meſſage.

Har. Let us fly to her, Henbury. Surely affairs have taken a fortunate turn.

Mrs. Hen. This meſſage ſeems to promiſe you a happy meeting. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE XII.

SCENE CHANGES TO SIR JEFFERY'S HOUSE.

Sir JEFFERY, *Lady* EDMONDS, *and Mr.* HENBURY.

Sir JEFFERY.

I Cannot forgive myſelf for being ſo impoſed upon.

Lady Ed. My dear Sir, do not let that thought diſturb you; who is there that may not be impoſed upon? Deceit is the villain's weapon, and it is ſuch an one as a good man cannot eaſily defend himſelf from; his honeſty renders him unſuſpicious, and lays him open to the treachery of his adverſary. Vice may for a time triumph over virtue; but virtue is not on that account leſs amiable, nor leſs deſirable; even the evils that flow from it are endeared to us, by reflecting on their ſource.

Sir Jeff. But it is making ſuch a fool of one.

Lady Ed. By no means; more particularly in your caſe; how was it poſſible you could ſuppoſe your brother ſo bad a man! except the facts againſt him were fully proved, it would have been unnatural.

Sir Jeff. If ſo be that be the caſe, it is very well; but let it be as it may, I will think no more about it; ſince I have got one ſon and heir ſafe, I am contented; but I long to ſee him.

Mr. Hen. Your longing is ſoon gratified, Sir Jeffery, for here he comes.

SCENE XIII.

Enter HARRIET, *and Mrs.* HENBURY.

HARRIET *runs to Lady* EDMONDS.

MY dear Madam, do I once more embrace you?

Lady Ed. My deareſt child, I muſt neither indulge my own tranſports, nor receive yours; duty commands their being ſuſpended; let me preſent to a father the worthieſt, the moſt amiable, of ſons.

Sir Jeff. [*Embraces Harriet.*] My deareſt boy, (if in caſe you are a boy) I am overjoyed to ſee thee. I wiſh thou hadſt been named Jeffery, but no matter for that, Sir Harry will ſound well enough; thy eldeſt ſon ſhall be called Jeffery, and then the Sir Jeffery will not end in me. How couldſt thou deceive me ſo, thou little dear raſcal,

and pass upon me for a trumpery girl?

Her. Had not the necessity for it been so often urged to me, I assure you, Sir, I could not have prevailed on myself to wear. So long a disguise by no means pleasing to me; but I hope, Sir, you will forgive it.

Sir Jeff. Forgive my boy! Ay sure, what would I not forgive thee! I loved thee dearly, for all that has passed, when I took thee for a girl; but I love thee ten times better now that thou art a boy. Forgive thee! Why, I have forgiven thy mother; if so be, that in

ease

caſe ſhe had put a trick upon me without reaſon, do you ſee, I ſhould never have forgiven her; but James, and one or two more, who knew all the villainy, have told us the whole ſtory; as how my wicked brother was by the devil ſet upon killing all my ſons; ſo that if ſo be my lady had not paſſed you off for a girl, you would not have been here now, and I ſhould have had no heir of my own loins. I would hang the villain if I could catch him, for all he is my own brother, for he is the more unnatural wretch for that: to poiſon my children, rob my buroe, and ſteal my beſt horſe!

Lady

Lady Ed. His wickedneſs will be his puniſhment. Diſtreſs of circumſtances, and the ſtings of conſcience, inflict ſeverer pangs than the halter or the axe: I ſhould be ſorry to ſee the brother to my huſband, and the uncle of my children, brought to a public execution.

Sir Jeff. Why, to be ſure, as you ſay, my lady, it would be a little diſagreeful to have him hanged, and yet he deſerves no better, wicked wretch as he is. But I have got my ſweet dear little Harry here, for all him.

Har.

Har. Thanks to my mother's care, I live to endeavour, by my duty and affection, to increaſe the happineſs of your future years. To her prudence and goodneſs we are indebted for this bleſſing.

Sir Jeff. Why, aye, that is true; I believe ſhe is a good woman, for all what brother uſed to ſay; but you muſt not love her better than your own dear father, Harry.

Har. I ſhall ever retain the tendereſt, the moſt dutiful affection, for both; and let you and I, Sir, try which can

love

love her beſt. The many afflictions ſhe has ſuffered, deſerve all the compenſation we can make.

Sir Jeff. There is ſomething in what you ſay, Harry, and I will do every thing you deſire; I love you ſo dearly, I can refuſe nothing you aſk.

Lady Ed. Excellent youth! What ſufferings can be ſo great, that the bleſſing of having ſuch a ſon would not more than compenſate!

Enter SERVANT.

Serv. Lord Bruton is come to wait on your honour.

Sir Jeff. Oh! aſk him to walk up, deſire him to walk up. [*Exit ſervant.*] He cannot take it ill now, you know, that my Harry would not marry his ſon; if ſo be in caſe he had, he would have made but a ſcurvy ſort of a wife, he, he, he; a very ſcurvy wife, he, he, he.

SCENE

SCENE XIV.

Enter Lord BRUTON.

Mrs. HENBURY, *aside to* HARRIET.

HOW will you come off now?

Har. I know not; I ſhall be put to the utmoſt ſtretch of my aſſurance.

[*Aſide to Mrs. Henbury.*

Lord

Lord Bru. Your ſervant, Sir Jeffery. I came to pay a viſit to you and Mr. Edmonds; but I am moſt agreeably ſurprized to ſee your lovely daughter here; all now I hope is peace and amity.

Sir Jeff. Why look you, my Lord, I am too much overjoyed to know much about peace; I am all in a fluſter now, but I ſhall be peaceable enough by and by; but you muſt know, my lord, that my lovely daughter here is a lovely ſon; and that you know is a better thing. I am ſure your lordſhip will now forgive the refuſal your ſon met with;

with; Harry would not have made a fit wife for a nobleman, for they want heirs to keep up their family, and poor Harry could never have been the mother of children, he, he, he. But if your lordſhip has a daughter, that would make another kind of a ſtory; I dare ſay he would make a very good father.

Lord Bru. Your daughter ſon! what do you mean, Sir Jeffery? you are very jocoſe, I perceive, but I proteſt I do not underſtand the jeſt. [*Aſide.*] What a fool they make of the man!

Lady

Lady Ed. It is very true, my lord, for reasons your lordship may hereafter know; the sex of that young man has hitherto been concealed, and he has passed for our daughter; but the disguise being no longer necessary, he will henceforward appear in a character more worthy of him.

Lord Bru. Amazement! Pardon me if I apply to the person who certainly best knows the truth of this affair.—Madam,—— Sir, I know not what to call you, is it true that you are no longer Miss Edmonds?

Har.

Har. It is moſt certain; I never had a natural right to be ſo, my lord; the title was given me only by courteſy; and I very readily relinquiſh it for any that is more ſuitable to my ſex.

Lord Bru. Very well, Sir —— am I well uſed?

Har. Why, really, my lord, I am afraid I ought to confeſs, that I have taken ſome unjuſtifiable liberties with your lordſhip; but what could I do? you were ſo importunate a lover, reſiſtance was impoſſible. Could I convert myſelf into a woman, your lordſhip

ſhip cannot doubt but I would make uſe of the power, ſince without it I offer to fulfil my engagement, and to marry you, if you ſtill ſigh for the poſſeſſion of this fair hand; but I am apprehenſive that, agreeable to the ſuggeſtions of my prophetic ſpirit, I ſhall find your lordſhip an inconſtant lover.

Lord Bru. Thou art a very impudent young fellow, I ſee that; your impudence goes farther towards convincing me, that you have indeed hitherto worn a diſguiſe, than all the aſſertions made by the company, But do you think, Sir, that I ſhall ſit down quietly under this deceit; tricked as I

am of my consent to a match which I should otherwise never have permitted!

Har. As for your bearing it quietly, my lord, I do not pretend to think about it; you certainly have a right to take your choice. I do not attempt to defend the part I have acted towards your lordship, for I really think you have just cause of complaint; though, perhaps, some excuse might be made for me, in consideration of your having endeavoured to force your son into a marriage, which, had I been a proper mate, must, from his disinclination to the match, have

rendered

rendered me unhappy. The consent, out of which you say I have tricked you, is neither dishonourable to your family, nor much to your son's pecuniary disadvantage; however, if what I have said does not satisfy you, I have so great a regard for your lordship, that I am willing to give you such satisfaction as you shall require, at any place or time you shall please to appoint.

Mrs. Hen. [*Aside to Harriet.*] What do you mean?

Har. [*Aside to Mrs. Henbury.*] To quiet his lordship. Be under no appre-

henſions. See how his anger ſubſides; how the muſcles of his face relax into placidity.

Lady Ed. What are we to underſtand by this altercation between you and Lord Bruton?

Sir Jeff. I know as how I can underſtand nothing about it.

Har. When I have his lordſhip's permiſſion, I will readily explain it to you.

Lord Bru. Well, I ſee no one but myſelf, will look upon it otheriſe than as a jeſt, therefore I believe my wiſeſt

way

way will be to join in the laugh; yet, I ſhould wiſh it may tranſpire as little as poſſible out of this company; I ſhall be thought an old fellow indeed, not to know a man from a woman.

Har. Beſide this company, it is known to no perſons, but Lord Leſſingham and Miſs Martin; and I am ſure you may depend both on their ſecrecy and ours; though an error wherein your lordſhip has ſo many companions, can bring no reflexion on your diſcernment: I think the ridicule may more properly fall on me, for the effeminacy of my appearance; however, your lordſhip may command our ſilence; and I muſt

acknowledge myſelf much obliged to you for ſo readily forgiving me the deceit.

Lord Bru. Thou art a fine ſpirited young fellow, it is impoſſible to be angry with thee; and though I liked thee better as a girl, yet you will make me ſome amends if you will look upon me as one of your friends. I perceive Madam (to Lady Edmonds) you and Sir Jeffery ſtill ſeem a little puzzled; the ſolution of the riddle is ſhort and eaſy; that equivocal perſonage had promiſed to make me your ladyſhip's ſon-in-law.

SCENE LAST.

Enter Mr. and Miſs MARTINS, *Lord* LESSINGHAM, *and Sir* RICHARD LUTON.

Mr. MARTIN.

YOU muſt forgive our intruſion, gentlemen and ladies; ſtrange ſtories go about, we are told of metamorphoſes as extraordinary as any in Ovid,

and are come to inquire into the truth. Is it ſo, Sir Jeffery? Do girls turn into boys at your houſe?

Sir Jeff. Yes, yes, that they do; Harriet is turned into Harry, that is all.

Mr. Mar. I wiſh you joy, I wiſh you joy heartily; the change is for the better; I do not care if one of my girls would do the ſame. Will you ſhew Emily the way, young gentleman: Lord Leſſingham ſtands ſo near me, I dare not deſire you to give Caroline your inſtructions; for I ſuppoſe his lordſhip likes her rather better as ſhe is.

Lord

Lord Leſſ. Yes, indeed, Sir, I bar all ſuch metamorphoſes. I can conſent to no manner of change in my Caroline.

Har. You cannot find a perſon, Sir, who, if he had that power, would be more averſe to exerciſing it on Miſs Emilia.

Sir Jeff. Ah! ſuch bleſſings don't fall to every one's ſhare, but I wiſh you were as happy as I am. I am ſo over-joyed to find my Harriet is a boy, that I ſcarcely know where I am. I love him now ten times better than ever. Art thou as happy as I am, my dear Harry?

Har. I wish I were, Sir, and it is in the power of you and this gentleman (pointing to Mr. Martin) to make me so.

Sir Jeff. How? how? I will do any thing for thee, if so be, it be in my power.

Har. Though I cannot convert Miss Emilia into a son, at Mr. Martin's desire, if you can prevail with him to accept me as such, you will render me the happiest of mankind. I have long smothered in my breast the sincerest, the tenderest passion, for the lovely Emily; denied the relief of even declaring

claring it to herſelf; and if I may not obtain her, I muſt be the moſt wretched of beings, till death brings me relief.

Sir Rich. How, Sir?

Sir Jeff. The poor boy makes me cry for very pity.

Mr. Mar. Sir Richard, don't be under any diſturbance, you have my word; and you, young gentleman, ought to know that Solomon Martin never broke his word in his life, nor ever will.

Sir Jeff. How can you have the heart now to vex my poor boy? Con-

ſider I have but juſt got him; don't ſpoil all my pleaſure, by making him pine and grieve. I'll ſettle any jointure you pleaſe upon your daughter, if in caſe you will let him have her. I will make him as good a match as you can deſire.

Mr. Mar. What the devil had he to do to be maſquerading? I ſhould have liked him as well as another if he had come in time, but my word is engaged.

Har. [*Aſide to Emilia.*] Deareſt Emily, join your entreaties with mine; if you have any regard for me, let not an ill-timed baſhfulneſs blaſt all my hopes.

Car.

Car. [*Aſide to Emilia.*] This is no time for reſerve, ſpeak your choice boldly, and throw not your happineſs away.

Lord Leſſ. [*Aſide to Emilia.*] Silence would now be inexcuſable: take courage —— (to Mr. Martin) though you have given your word to Sir Richard, Sir, yet it muſt be on a ſuppoſition, that your daughter's choice concurred with yours; I am ſure you are too good a father to wiſh to force her inclinations. Let us know therefore from her own lips, how ſhe ſtands affected.

Mr. Mar. You may know it from mine, Sir; my daughter's inclinations

are always the same as her father's. My choice is here.

Lord Bru. That does not appear to me so certain, Mr. Martin; if I can read the young lady's countenance, she has a choice of her own.

Lord Leſſ. Speak, Madam, have you given either your word or heart to Sir Richard?

Sir Rich. I beg your lordſhip will not interfere in an affair that no way belongs to you, if you would not have me reſent the impertinence as I ought. As Mr. Martin has told you I have his word, and whether I have the lady's or no,

no, is not your buſineſs; I have no reaſon to doubt her bleſſing me with her hand.

Em. My hand, Sir, can never be a bleſſing to you, becauſe I cannot give it but with the utmoſt reluctance. I have frankly declared my diſinclination; I have told you, that to marry you, would make me wretched. I had then only my indifference to render me ſo; I have now an additional cauſe, my affection for another; for I will not deny my prepoſſeſſion in that gentleman's favour, (pointing to Harriet) founded in the tender friendſhip I conceived for him, while he appeared of my own ſex. You have hitherto ta-

den an ungenerous advantage of my duty to my father; you may do so still, for though my life should prove the sacrifice, I will never disobey him; but you would do well to consider whether you would act wisely in driving me to desperation.

Mr. Mar. I hope good folk you are now satisfied; though you would not take my word, you will, I presume, take hers, when she tells you that she concurs with me in the choice of Sir Richard.

Lady Ed. Mr. Martin, Mr. Martin, this is no time for such foolery, when your daughter's happiness is at stake, a pre-

tended

tended misunderstanding of her words is unpardonable; on matters less important indulge your whim, assert that black is white, that night is day, or any absurdity you please, but do not sacrifice her to your caprice; do not insult her by such pretended misconstruction. The word of every man of honour should be sacred, I therefore cannot ask you to violate yours; but I am sure Sir Richard will give you back your promise. It is impossible, after what he has heard, that he can be mean, base, nay foolish enough, to insist on the performance.

Sir Rich. I shall, no doubt, be thought extremely daring to act a part your ladyship

ſhip has honoured with ſo many expreſſive epithets; *but* I proteſt I cannot think of relinquiſhing—

Lord Laſs. Dear Sir Richard, what can you expect from marrying a woman whoſe heart is engaged to another? You who are ſo well qualified to gain a lady's affections, that perhaps Miſs Martin is the only one you can addreſs, that would not make you a ſuitable return.

Lord Bru. Faith, Sir Richard, the caſe would not admit of a doubt. Women are not ſo ſcarce, nor ſo coy, that a clever young fellow like you, need be reduced to marry a girl againſt her will. Upon my ſoul there is no ſuch ſuper-

fluity

fluity of happineſs in the married ſtate, when the woman joyfully becomes a bride, as ſhould tempt a man to enter into it with an unwilling fair one. The kindeſt wife is but a leſſer evil.

Car. [*Aſide to Lord Bruton.*] Was your lordſhip always of that opinion?

Lord Bru. [*Aſide to Caroline.*] Not abſolutely; my opinion has been ſubject to little variations; yeſterday made a change in my ſyſtem, but I have returned to it to-day.

Lord Leſſ. Come, prithee, Luton, act like a man of ſenſe and generoſity, and reſign a woman who cannot make you happy,

happy, ſince being yours will render her wretched.

Sir Rich. I am prodigiouſly obliged to you, good people, for being ſo ready to direct my conduct; but as I have been ſome years out of tutelage, I have learnt to be a free agent, and intend to continue ſo. Mr. Martin, will you fulfil your promiſe of giving me this lady?

Mr. Mar. I never broke one, and I ſhall not begin at theſe years; take her then (gives him Emily's hand) and make the beſt of her; you know how the land lies; if the man who is acquainted with the rocks and ſhoals that lie in his way, cannot avoid ſhipwreck,

he

he muſt be an unſkilful mariner. You have been fully informed by ſome of the good company of the dangers that threaten you, you muſt ſteer your courſe cautiouſly, or you may have reaſon to wiſh I had ſhewn leſs regard to my word.

Em. [*Kneel; to her father and to Sir Richard.*] Dear Sir, if you have any tenderneſs, any compaſſion for your daughter. —— Sir Richard, if you really feel any love for me — do not thus cruelly doom me to a life of wretchedneſs!

[*Weeps.*

Sir Rich. Riſe, Madam, and ceaſe theſe unavailing ſolicitations. You are mine; your father has reſigned you to me,

me, and as my property I ſhall diſpoſe of you.——Mr. Edmonds, will you accept this lady from my hands?

Har. Generous, Sir Richard! accept her! yes, as the beſt gift of heaven, my deareſt Emily! Teach me how to thank (as I ought) this worthy man.

Em. You cannot learn of me, ſince I want words even to thank him as he deſerves on my own account.

Sir Rich. Spare me your thanks, my lovely girl, as they will obliquely tell the ſtrength of your averſion to me.

Har. However ſtrong it may have been, you have now rendered yourſelf a dangerous

dangerous rival; for ſo generous an action is ſufficient to make a revolution in my Emily's heart, and give you the ſovereignty there.

Em. If love neceſſarily followed eſteem, Sir Richard might indeed expect a conſiderable ſhare of my affections.

Har. May I hope, Sir, that you and my excellent mother will ſanctify my choice, and obtain the concurrence of Mr. Martin?

Sir Jeff. Any thing, my dear boy; I will do any thing that you deſire.

Lady

Lady Ed. If your choice were leſs agreeable to me, I could not in ſo fortunate an hour have refuſed my concurrence; but might I have directed your heart, it ſhould have been to the gentle, the lovely Emilia; and I hope Mr. Martin will not deſtroy the pleaſure of ſo happy a day, as I am ſure Sir Jeffery will readily comply with whatever ſettlement, or other conditions, he ſhall require.

Mr. Mar. Why, look you, Madam, it is the very thing I ſhould have wiſhed, had I known it was poſſible; and this Emilia knew well enough, or ſhe would not have choſen the young gentleman. I am ſure ſhe would not have acted ſo improperly

improperly as to have conſented to any thing without believing ſhe had the ſanction of my *tacit* approbation, at leaſt.

Har. My ſtudy, Sir, ſhall be to ſhew by obedience to you, and affection to your daughter, that I am not unworthy the happineſs you give me.

Lord Bru. Where is Mr. Edmonds? he ought to be a witneſs of the general joy.

Mr. Mar. Oh! as for him he is gone to the devil, I believe; I met him as I was taking the air this afternoon, riding as if the devil drove him. I called to him, but he would not ſtop. I ſuſpect-

ed

ed he was gone mad, and expected to have seen a parcel of fellows at his heels in pursuit of him, but I met none; I cannot tell what made him look so frighted.

Sir Jeff. He had reason enough, if so be he did look frighted. Oh! my lord, you cannot think what a vile wretch he has been. I wish people had followed him, if in case they had overtaken him, that he might be brought to justice for the harm he has done us.

Lady Ed. No, my dear, it is better as it is; conscience wounds deeper than the sword of justice; and though its arrows will sometimes be blunted by prosperity,

ſperity, in adverſity and diſtreſs, they are acutely felt. And when I conſider what he muſt ſuffer under the oppreſſion of poverty and remorſe, my reſentment ſubſides, and I cannot ſuppreſs ſome emotions of compaſſion. But let us turn our thoughts from ſo melancholy a ſubject, enjoy without alloy, the bleſſings which now open on our view, and draw from our reflections on what is paſſed, irrefragable arguments, to convince us, That though the villain may triumph for a day, virtue alone can yield permanent happineſs, can give preſent peace and future felicity.

THE END.